ISLAM ANSWERS ATHEISM

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RIGEL
PUBLISHING

This book is dedicated to
every Sancho Panza in the world.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE COMPASSIONATE,
THE MOST MERCIFUL

Contents

TRANSLITERATIONAL KEY

ا / آ / ىٰ	ā	ظ	ẓ
ب	b	ع	ʿ
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	th	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
ح	ḥ	ك	k
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	ي	y/ī
ش	sh	ة	a
ص	ṣ	ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ	أ	a
ط	ṭ	إ	i

"Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance."

—George Bernard Shaw

Introduction

READER, WELCOME! I urge you to read this book in its entirety. Do not judge this book until you have read it all. A book does not reveal everything until you have read it completely. You will not completely appreciate it until you read all of its chapters, like the tesserae in a mosaic. Whenever you think something has not been answered or a point not clarified, you will find the answer and clarification further down or in another chapter where that point will be more relevant.

This book is the result of engagements with a vociferous and provocative collection of people—one could almost say a faction—called the New Atheists, in addresses at universities, mosques, churches, public areas, as well as in private homes and informal gatherings. New Atheism is on a crusade, 'a holy war', to dethrone its preconceived ideas of God and indeed all religions. This book will show how these New Atheist arguments use fallacy, straw man arguments, emotional content and peculiar invective to disparage and denigrate. The book aims, in particular, to counter the propaganda peddled and perpetrated against Islam.

After the Twin Tower attacks in New York on September 11TH 2001, Islam was assaulted from all sides for being the doctrine of a law-giving God. Outdated notions were resus-

citated into an anti-Islam toolkit to combat those perceived as 'Islamic zombies' and new arguments were reinjected from the armaments of secular humanism and anti-theism. Islam was declared the greatest force for evil. Propaganda became the key tool to malign, denigrate, mock, deride, and patronise religion and religious people, perpetrated not less than in the spirit of Goebbels' Third Reich 'Reichspropagandaleiter':

> "Propaganda has no principles of its own. It has only one goal, and in politics that goal is always to conquer the masses. Any means to that end is good. and any means that does not serve that end is bad."

The entire polemical argument against Islam is encapsulated in the following exaggerated vitriol: 'A superstitious, Jew hating, violent religion that kills innocents, enslaves free people, that has a totalitarian homophobic, misogynistic law that oppresses women and uses draconian punishments like amputation and stoning.' A sentiment especially echoed by Richard Dawkins who unabashedly tweeted:

> "Haven't read Koran so couldn't quote chapter & verse like I can for Bible. But often say Islam greatest force for evil today."[1]

This primitive fossil and zoologist is the ostensive leader of New Atheism. An academic who has not read the Qur'ān, yet in a louche, imperialist, orientalist style Richard Dawkins writes the word 'Qur'ān' with the outdated spelling of 'Koran', judging Islam to be the greatest force for evil. Indeed, it would be strange if such sentiments were ever expressed

for his former associate, Jefferey Epstein, or the rabid atheist and physicist Lawrence Krauss. Lawrence Krauss not only received hundreds of thousands of dollars from Epstein for funding his science project, even after the latter was convicted of heinous crimes against humanity, but was also forced to resign from the University of Arizona in 2018 after allegations of gross misconduct were made by women at his university[2]. These are people who flaunt themselves as defenders of women's and children's rights against religion, or any other real or perceived infringement on basic humanity. Yet if any misconduct, carried out by an adherent of any faith—in particular, Islam—is identified, then the entire faith will be their target. Excuse this author for any ostensible sniping or quoting of headlines for maximum effect as this is done only to exemplify something of the noxiousness flung by New Atheism. If it is thought that this will merely increase their diatribe, then I suggest that this only reflects a lack of experience in the argumentation of this demagogic assemblage.

Is belief in God a danger to civilisation? More specifically, is Allah along with the teachings of Islam a threat to human progress or to western civilisation? Such were the incendiary premises that led the shameless propaganda, forwarded by what has become to be known as New Atheism, that exploded onto the public scene in what was termed an "atheist revolution", fanned by verbose but hollow arguments, in popular atheist paperbacks.

New Atheism was the political tool which justified wars abroad, furthering secular values into places deemed anachronistically religious, like Saddam Hussein's Iraq. That the Iraqi regime was self-identified as secular was not stated when Christopher Hitchens—author of the book 'God Is Not Great'—wrote:

> "I think it's us, plus the 82ND Airborne and the 101ST, who are the real fighters for secularism at the moment, the ones who are really fighting the main enemy."[3]

This was said as part of the backdrop to Hitchens' support of the invasion of Iraq on the unsubstantiated pretext of it having 'weapons of mass destruction' and Saddam's alleged support of Al-Qaeda, both false claims, as became quite clear from the intelligence gathered once the invasion had taken place. This invasion by the so-called 'real fighters for secularism', into a region where Christians, Muslims and other minorities co-existed, allowed it to become a tinder box and killing ground for warring factions and sectarianism.

Hitchens, who later would die of cancer, did not mention that the US jets and ground force fired nearly 10,000 rounds of depleted uranium (DU) in heavily populated civilian areas in 2003 alone. Depleted uranium, attractive to weapons designers for its extreme hardness and ability to pierce armour is a chemically toxic and radioactive heavy metal. 300,000 DU rounds were estimated to have been fired during the 2003 Iraq war, the vast majority by US forces[4]. A total of 782,414 DU rounds were believed to have been fired during the First Gulf War in 1991, mostly by US forces again. However, less than seven percent of the weapons used in that conflict were 'smart', as the Pentagon admitted long after the war. Seventy percent of the 88,500 bombs dropped on Iraq and Kuwait—the equivalent of seven Hiroshimas—fell on populated areas[5]. It was claimed Iraq's launch sites for Scud missiles were 'knocked out', when, in fact, not a single one was.

None of this was reported at the time. Journalists, lied to, accepted those lies and passed them on to the public[6]. Although he was the most cultured amongst the 'four horsemen'

of New Atheism, Hitchens was a journalist and a militant atheist. His sentiments and his support for war abroad resembles something that Winston Churchill said about Kurds and others when Britain divided the Ottoman Muslim territories:

> "I do not understand the squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes."[7]

The labels, and methods, may have changed but the policies against Islam and the Muslims are the same. Let it be borne in mind that dumdum bullets, concentration camps, the Bolshevik revolutions and Communist ideology, Nazism, the extermination of the Native Americans and the Aborigines, nuclear warheads and subsequent strikes against Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were all non-Islamic in origin.

Has much changed since then? If we read up on things such as the Iraq sanctions, the use of depleted uranium weapons in Iraq, the millions of children dead, the invasion of Libya, weapons being sold by the US and UK to Saudi Arabia, to kill people in places like Yemen (the biggest humanitarian crisis today) and the historical support for brutal dictators like General Suharto who killed millions, we realise nothing much has changed. The world is much more intricate and complex today, including the Muslim majority countries, for such a simpleton approach in blaming Islam and its fourteen-hundred-year-old civilisation.

The 'Pope of New Atheism' is without doubt Richard Dawkins, a renowned evolutionary biologist and social-media troll, who once wrote:

> "Listening to the lovely bells of Winchester, one of our great medieval cathedrals. So much nicer than the aggressive sounding 'Allahu Akhbar.' Or is it just my cultural upbringing?"

From his many atrocious tweets, one of the most horrendous was:

> "With respect to those meanings of 'human' that are relevant to the morality of abortion, any fetus is less human than an adult pig."[8]

This inhumane, immoral, unethical, and bigoted attitude of New Atheism leadership is mirrored by Sam Harris and his attitude to race, genetics and intelligence. Sam Harris deliberated the findings of Charles Murray, co-author of 'The Bell Curve' which controversially posited a genetic basis for the perceived difference between the IQ's of the black and white races. Sam framed the issues Murray had raised in the following way:

> "People don't want to hear that a person's intelligence is in large measure due to his or her genes and there seems to be very little we can do environmentally to increase a person's intelligence even in childhood. It's not that the environment doesn't matter, but genes appear to be 50 to 80 percent of the story. People don't want to hear this. And they certainly don't want to hear that average IQ differs across races and ethnic groups. Now, for better or worse, these are all facts. In fact, there is almost nothing in psychological science for which there is more evidence than these claims about IQ, about the validity of testing for it, about its importance in the real world, about its heritability, and about its differen-

> tial expression in different populations. Again, this is what a dispassionate look at (what) decades of research suggests. Unfortunately, the controversy over 'The Bell Curve' did not result from legitimate, good-faith criticisms of its major claims. Rather, it was the product of a politically correct moral panic that totally engulfed Murray's career and has yet to release him."[9]

Such Ku-Klux-Clan-type narratives can easily (mis)appropriate the 'science' of 'the saintly' Richard Dawkins who tells us the science of eugenics is correct even though 'heaven forbid we should do it'. Richard Dawkins' tweets ran:

> "It's one thing to deplore eugenics on ideological, political, moral grounds. It's quite another to conclude that it wouldn't work in practice. Of course it would. It works for cows, horses, pigs, dogs and roses. Why on earth wouldn't it work for humans? Facts ignore ideology."

Then he clarifies with:

> "For those determined to miss the point, I deplore the idea of a eugenic policy. I simply said deploring it doesn't mean it wouldn't work. Just as we breed cows to yield more milk, we could breed humans to run faster or jump higher. But heaven forbid that we should do it."

And with:

> "A eugenic policy would be bad. I'm combating the illogical step from 'X would be bad' to 'So X is impossible'. It would work in the same sense as it works for cows. Let's fight it on

> moral grounds. Deny obvious scientific facts and we lose—or at best derail—the argument."[10]

Richard Dawkins' sentiments remind me of Alfred Hitchcock's American psychological crime film 'Rope' where the killers, Brandon and Phillip, justify their horrendous crime using the reasoning of their housemaster, Rupert, even though he would not endorse any acting upon his philosophy. Not unsimilarly, misguided people may only too well utilise the housemaster Dawkins' science for eugenics.

The fact is that the atheist compass is unstable in terms of ethics and morality and can vary according to situation and era. This leads to a dystopian society. Islam, in contrast, provides basic universal laws that govern all human morality—in any place and time—that safeguard against any moral conundrums. However, New Atheism would have us believe that Islam is a type of Fideism that assaults human reason and undermines the rational mind.

In six chapters, this book disproves this claim. Read patiently, as each chapter interconnects like a link in a chain. While reading the first chapter you may feel certain things are being left out but as you proceed you will find what you were looking for in its appropriate place.

Chapter One is an overview of the role of reason in the Islamic faith, the Qur'ān's encouragement of rationale and condemnation of blind faith, before looking at the early development of rational theology and the *Kalām* science, the dialectical method used against heresy and including atheism.

Chapter Two is an excursion into the epistemology of the *Kalām* methodology to derive knowledge and arrive at certainty regarding any given fact. This chapter also delves into

common material fallacies and a summary of other philosophies which are in contradistinction to Islam and subscribed to by many atheists knowingly or unknowingly.

Chapter Three starts by unravelling scepticism with specific reference to David Hume and earlier Hellenistic philosophy, then it moves to the specific proofs for God. This chapter concludes by considering the innumerable signposts to God; anything from Fibonacci numbers to a snowflake.

Chapter Four delves into the problem of evil, human free will and other deep philosophical objections to God. Of special interest is an in-depth analysis of Stephen Fry's controversial interview regarding God and evil.

Chapter Five is a response to the claims made regarding Islam's position on science, and scientific objections against the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, concluding with a rational approach to the hotly contested topic on evolution theory.

Chapter Six looks at the historicity of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and the most widely debated subjects surrounding *Sharīʿa* law like jihad, slavery, punishments and human rights.

This book will especially benefit atheists and detractors of Islam at the very least by sophisticating the discussion on Islam when engaging with learned Muslims.

Let us hope that Muslims and atheists engage in dialogue and debate at least with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of *Kalām*, philosophy and science, and that this book becomes a means to achieving that goal.

"There is no illness more debilitating than lack of intellect."

—Caliph ʿAlī ﵁

CHAPTER ONE

Islam & Atheism

1.1 HOW CAN ISLAM ANSWER ATHEISM?

FOR MANY ATHEISTS and former Muslims alike, Islam, like other religions, is a myth or superstition, or a development of earlier myths and superstitions. For them, like other blind faiths, Islam is problematic. So, the question arises as to exactly how a so called dogmatic religion can actually address the challenges of atheism; an atheism which is ostensibly based on intelligence and science.

There are two things to mention at this juncture. The first is that many of the conceptualisations of atheists as well as those of former Muslims are based on straw man arguments, or a simplification of very complicated issues. Secondly, many of the things that are discussed by New Atheism are not new at all, having been debated for hundreds of years and now merely re-packaged for a new age. Objections raised against the existence of God are in fact old and were debated centuries ago in centres of learning like Baghdad.

Atheism, which may be defined as the refusal to believe in God or any god at all, is the personal decision of any individual, but whether that decision is rooted in knowledge, wisdom and objectivity at all times is another question. Similarly, may not the decision to adopt atheism have other

motives? To what degree do caprice, notoriety, arrogance or even vengeance, along with a host of other motives and ambivalent feelings affect that decision? Pre-conceived ideas regarding believers are also found in atheist groups and individuals. So, let us shed any pre-conceived notions and ideas, and enter this discussion objectively.

Many of those things deemed true regarding Islam but which are in fact distorted or misrepresented are answered in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. What is intended in this chapter is to give an overview of how rational theology developed. On the one hand there is theology, the discussion of religious beliefs, while on the other, there is also rational theology rooted in the logical basis of any belief. Rational theology is a central pillar to the religion of Islam.

1.2 THE PRIME IMPORTANCE OF *KALĀM*

Kalām is the name given to rational theology after its development in the early years of Islam[11]. Linguistically, *Kalām* means speech. The reason for the name was because speaking was seen as a requisite for debating religious creed and presenting its rational basis. Others have stated that the word *Kalām* became coterminous with rational theology at a later time when the nature of the Qur'ān was debated amongst Muslims. The word *Kalām* contrasted the speech of man with the speech of God (the Qur'ān). Whatever the actual origins of the name, *Kalām* is a science, a rational tool that is utilised in analysing any argument.

The term *Kalām* was used by two groups; one of which allowed Greek and other philosophies to dictate its rational discourse, while the other group were traditionalists who

utilised rational tools to dismantle any argument that contravened the Qur'ān and consensus-based belief. The latter group may occasionally be found condemning *Kalām* in the early period. This, however, only occurred since a clear distinction had not been drawn between rational theology in defence of the Qur'ān, prophetic tradition and consensus-based belief, and the *Kalām* of the philosophers who contravened religious orthodoxy and attempted to fit the teachings of ancient Greek philosophy into the Islamic context. At a later period, once the philosophers had lost their sway over politics and the persecution of orthodox Muslims, the term *Kalām* became specifically to mean the rational theology of the traditionalist *Ahl al-Sunna*[12].

A question arises here as to whether rational belief is encouraged in the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition, or some thing introduced by theologians out of necessity.

The Qur'ān obliges people to have knowledge of the foundations of their belief and prohibits blind conformity. The Qur'ān states, ﴾*Do not follow that which you have no knowledge of, because surely the hearing, sight and heart will be questioned regarding that*﴿ [Qur'ān 17:36]. In numerous verses of the Qur'ān, the divine imperative is 'to know'; therefore, the foundation of belief in Islam must be based upon knowledge rather than mere conjecture.

Furthermore, throughout the prophetic traditions there are mention of dialogues, debates and discourses between the Prophet ﷺ and the people of Makkah who attempted to discredit him. Such debates, as is evident, were consistently based upon the rational mind.

In like manner, *Kalām* theologians throughout the subsequent centuries debated and discoursed on the numerous contentions against Islamic creed within this rational approach.

The role of the scholars to elucidate various areas of theology to the multitudes became integral to the society of Muslims.

It is related that Ustādh Abū Bakr al-Fūrak, after having studied the proofs of religion for years, decided to retire to worship in isolation. While in seclusion, he heard someone call out to him, "Having become a proof of Allah for the creation, yet you choose to run away from that very creation!" On hearing this, Ustādh Abū Bakr abandoned his retirement and went back to teaching[13].

Similarly, Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, a rational theologian from the early period, ascended the mountains of Lebanon to avoid the persecution of philosophical zealots. The mountains he took refuge in turned out to be a place of worship and retreat for a very zealous religious group. Observing them engrossed in their form of worship, Abū Isḥāq is recorded as reprimanding them saying, "Consumers of cannabis! You abandon the nation of Muḥammad ﷺ even as the heretics overwhelm them." In response they said, "We have no patience with the people and neither do we have the capabilities that God has given you in responding to their arguments." So, Abū Isḥāq returned back to his home and penned works in response to the arguments of detractors of Islam[14].

These stories inform us that the role of the rational theologian [*mutakallim*] was of prime importance in Islam, simply because the foundations of the beliefs cannot be allowed to stand on shaky ground.

1.3 THE CATEGORIES OF BELIEF

Beliefs in general have been divided by theologians into three categories:

1. Belief which relies solely upon the intellect;
2. Belief which relies upon scripture; in the case of Islam that being the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition;
3. Belief which relies on both.

The verification of the truthfulness of any religious scripture should be preceded by a debate as to whether a God exists at all, before questioning what He has revealed to a prophet, and indeed, whether that prophet is truthful?

It has also been argued that the existence of God and His divine power, for instance, can be rationally proven without recourse to scripture, while the validation of many other beliefs are deemed rationally possible only through divine revelation, such as the metaphysical realm. As such, rational theology gives primary importance to two things, namely the rational basis for the existence of God and the proof for revelation, on which all matters proceeding after are determined.

1.4 DEGREES OF PROOF

Here it would be appropriate to mention what is meant by a proof. It is the type of proof sufficient for the intellect of that person, since not every person can be familiar with philosophical or scientific terminology, or able to compose a formal syllogistic argument. It would be sufficient for some to respond simply, saying, 'The creation around us' when asked how they know God exists, a response that would not of course satisfy the philosophically or scientifically trained with doubts regarding God, nor an outright denier of God, those who use their philosophical and scientific background

to argue the very existence of God, the validity of the Qur'ān and the Prophet ﷺ. Any response to such arguments would thus be the domain of *Kalām*.

It is related that someone once asked a Bedouin how he knew that a creator exists. The Bedouin responded by saying that when he observes camel tracks and camel dung trails, he knows there is a camel. Similarly, when he observes the mountains, valleys, deserts and oceans, he knows there is a creator. This type of reasoning may be unconvincing to many with a modern secular education, yet it was sufficient for that Bedouin.

Likewise, an old woman in a village was asked the same question while she was cooking meat broth in a large cauldron. She responded by saying that when she cooks and stirs the broth, if she stops stirring the contents remain still and the broth only moves when she stirs it. So when she observes the sunrise and the sunset, and the various positions of the sun throughout the day and during the seasons, the moon waxing and waning throughout the month, and the constellations changing with regularity every three months in the hemisphere, she knows with certainty that someone is moving all these celestial bodies the way she moves her broth, and if there were not nothing would be moving. When further asked whether that God could be one God and not two or multiple gods, she responded by saying that if another woman came to stir alongside her, they would dispute as to the direction of the stirring and the cauldron would tip and spill all its contents. So by the same reasoning, if there were two or more gods, they would disrupt the perfect balance observed in nature and the universe would be in chaos.

Such reasoning given by the Bedouin and the old woman, while sufficient for them, for others may lack sophistication.

It is these latter people who deserve a sound response from the *Kalām* specialists.

It is related that once, Imām al-Rāzī was walking through a crowd of people attempting to meet him because of his great fame. An old woman was passing and enquired as to what was happening. She was told that the man the crowd was greeting was none other than the renowned *Kalām* specialist and legal theorist, Imām al-Rāzī, who had over one hundred different proofs for the existence of God. She responded by saying, "One hundred proofs for a hundred doubts!" At first sight, this may seem to be a rebuke of the great al-Rāzī, but, in reality, it is rebuking those for whom Imām al-Rāzī had formulated those arguments in order to remove their doubts.

Knowing how to give detailed responses to people who may be in doubt, or to those who present misgivings is an obligation in Islam on the *Kalām* specialists. However, the general public too are obliged to learn a summary proof for their beliefs, with, according to one group of theologians, their faith deemed sinful or invalid through such blind conformity if not. The mere utterance of the articles of faith is for a person to be regarded as a Muslim by society and in his dealings to be known as a Muslim. Certitude in faith varies though and a person can easily fall into one of the following three categories:

1. A person's faith is doubtful or uncertain, then that faith is rendered invalid and the person is categorised as an unbeliever;
2. A person outwardly professes faith, yet inwardly does not believe, then that faith is also rendered invalid and the person is categorised as a hypocrite, or;

3. A person has certainty in faith, but yet does not acquire at least the general summary proofs by which he can safeguard his faith and remove doubts, then while that faith is acceptable, the person is nevertheless deemed a sinner. (Some theologians deem such a person as an unbeliever even though outwardly he may be treated as a Muslim.)

This demonstrates the extent of condemnation of ignorance in Islam and the blameworthy nature of blind conformity in faith issues.

What is meant by valid faith is that which is between the individual and his creator. Outwardly a person can be pious with all an Islamically religious exterior, but inwardly he could be a hypocrite or a doubter, the dire consequences of which remaining unknown to people on Earth.

1.5 BLIND CONFORMITY

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Traditional *Kalām* theologians understood blind conformity in belief to be dangerous to one's faith, with some taking the view that the belief of the conformist was invalid, no matter how staunch or dogmatic the adherent might appear. This raises the commonly held position that all faith is merely blind belief with any acquired certainty lacking real proof. The response in this case is that a person who has faith with certainty will have either acquired that faith through necessary proofs, or from no proof at all.

If the person has faith without proof then this is the kind of blind faith that is commonly understood as religious faith. According to theologians, this type of blind faith is not the sort of faith that will give salvation. They argue that firmness and certitude of belief based on some type of proof is what grants a person salvation in the Hereafter. Anything that falls short of certainty will leave the individual in doubt, imagination or mere conjecture, insufficient for salvation.

Appearances can be deceiving. A person may seem to be a staunch believer but yet has no salvation as he bases his faith on uncertainty. His staunchness and zealotry merely serve to cover that person's own doubt.

Some people attempt to validate the belief of a blind conformist by saying that early generations did not know technical terms of philosophy and science and as such their faith was valid. The response to this is simple. As outlined earlier, if they were confronted with new arguments and doubts, it would be a communal obligation to counter the new arguments, and every individual who is exposed to any type of doubt would have to learn, according to his capacity, the response to any such type of obscurities.

Others have argued that there is simplicity in blind conformity because it is reported that the likes of Imām al-Rāzī said at the time of his death that people should hold onto the religion of the old woman in the story. It has also been reported that the pious Caliph, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz exhorted the people to follow the religion of the old woman, children and the Bedouin[15]. This would appear to mean that having knowledge of the theological intricacies and the counter arguments to philosophical sceptics would not be incumbent on the old woman. Similarly, the entire community should not be obligated to learn rational theology at all its various levels

in order to counter sceptics and philosophical doubt. The response to this claim is that the statements of both the Caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and that of Imām al-Rāzī were made in reference to tenets of faith that were so well known that even the common people were familiar with those tenets as being orthodoxy, whilst heretical sects were questioning such tenets. In response to the obvious nature of such tenets being well known to all Muslims, and not just the professional theologian, both the Caliph and the Imām responded alike with their statements even though they lived five hundred years apart.

Neither does it entail that people need to know technical terms and specialist jargon in order to be rational. Both philosophers and rational theologians are known to give complicated names to simple concepts. In the *Kalām* method, this is done with Arabic, and in Western philosophy, with sometimes difficult sounding Latin names being given to simple concepts. That a person can be rational without being professionally trained in philosophy or rational theology is demonstrated in the stories of the Bedouin and the old woman. These statements however cannot be taken as a validation for blind faith and conformity.

1.6 THE INTUITIVE MIND OF THE PIOUS PREDECESSORS [*SALAF*]

Many concepts that are theoretical for most can be self-evident for the very intelligent, and this is one of the prime reasons that many in the early generation did not feel the need to enter into technical discussion with opponents of Islamic belief. The Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ, for instance, was very sagacious and had an intellect that was unparalleled. Besides being im-

mensely knowledgeable, he could apprehend the most difficult issues with ease. His knowledge was so vast that he stated he could write a commentary on seven verses of the Qur'ān (the Opening [*al-Fātiḥa*] Chapter) which would need to be carried by over seventy camels due to its immense size[16]. He was also described as 'the door to the city of knowledge' by the Prophet ﷺ himself[17]. A man such as he could grasp deep concepts quickly and give impromptu responses to difficult questions with ease. He had no need to read books of philosophy and neither did those around him as they could always just refer back to him.

Once the Caliph ʿAlī ؓ was standing to deliver a sermon when a man stood up and asked a question regarding inheritance laws which for anyone else would have taken contemplation and calculation. The Caliph ʿAlī ؓ answered immediately without such a need. Those who were present in the audience were astounded at his brilliance. This particular question on inheritance laws became known as the 'Pulpit Question' in the books of jurisprudence[18].

Another story relating to Caliph ʿAlī's ؓ judgements, declared the best of judges by the Prophet ﷺ, was that of when two men approached him stating Person A had three loaves of bread and Person B had five loaves of bread, and while they were eating Person C joined them for the meal. Prior to Person C's departure, after the meal, he gave the two others eight silver dirham coins from which Person A received three dirhams and Person B, five. Receiving the three dirhams, Person A complained saying that the eight dirhams should be divided equally, both taking four each. Person B however insisted that the division should be in accordance with the number of loaves of bread that each had contributed. They decided to approach the Caliph ʿAlī ؓ for a fair judgement. The Caliph gave his judgement without hesitation saying to

Person A, "If you want a fair judgement then you only get one silver coin!" The man was astonished and enquired, "How is that so?" To which the Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ replied, "Three of you ate eight loaves in total, but we do not know the exact amount each one ate, so your shares are treated equally. As there were three to eat and eight loaves, we multiply three by eight which equals twenty-four. As you contributed three loaves of bread, we times three with the number of heads (three) which equals nine—this is your contribution. However, you ate eight portions of the overall twenty-four portions and therefore only have one share of twenty-four remaining. As for your companion, he contributed five loaves of bread and if we multiply five by the number of heads, which is three, it equals to fifteen. From that fifteen your companion ate eight portions leaving a remainder of seven, Therefore, one remains for you and seven for your companion, which means you take one dirham and he takes seven."[19]

In another incident, a woman approached him with the complaint that her brother had died leaving six hundred dirhams and the family had only given her one coin. In this particular case, she never mentioned who the other inheritors were, yet what needed to be calculated was intuitive and obvious for the Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ who promptly replied saying, "Your brother must have left behind as inheritors a wife, a mother, two daughters and twelve brothers." The woman said, "That is correct." To which the Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ said, "Then that is your fair share and they have not wronged you."[20]

The reason why the Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ was able to answer so quickly was because what was theoretical for the majority was self-evident for him. In later times, minds became lazy and slow-witted, with little or no patience for seeking knowledge, and even after learning something new they would forget it afterwards. It is for this reason that the rational theologians

emerged to fulfil the communal obligation of refuting the arguments and challenges presented by doubters of Islam or even its outright enemies.

1.7 THE MIND & THE INTELLECT

The prime importance of the mind and the intellect is illustrated in a conversation between Caliph ʿUmar ﵁ and the Prophet ﷺ, when the Prophet ﷺ was extolling the afterlife, the horrors of the grave and the having to face the two angels in that grave who dispense punishment to the unbelievers. At that point the Caliph ʿUmar ﵁ asked, "Will my mental faculties be intact at that time?" To which the Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes," and the Caliph ʿUmar ﵁ said, "I should be able to handle their questioning then." The Prophet ﷺ responded with, "ʿUmar is certain and truthful."[21] The angels in the grave are said to be frightening in appearance and manner, and a person will be sorely tested with the questions they ask regarding his faith. The Caliph's question indicates that he knew the prime importance of the mind and rational thinking.

Nevertheless, truth and conviction via the rational faculty and the mind can be acquired with silent contemplation—without speech—and it is not essential that an individual be adept in philosophy, science or anything technical. The rational theologians acted to organise ideas and terms, and formalised the rationale and thinking involved in the Islamic creed to ease those people not finding theoretical discussions intuitive. In every subsequent age, the rational theologians produced jargon deemed appropriate to that age and time. For that reason, Imām al-Ghazālī discouraged certain people, especially if they already had a conviction within the Islamic creed, from exploring *Kalām*, likening *Kalām* to a medicine

that should be taken in appropriate measure.

This position of Imām al-Ghazālī is sometimes used by those who deem rational theology irrelevant today, those who prefer a kind of blind faith and custom passed down from generation to generation. Such an interpretation would be a misreading of what Imām al-Ghazālī meant. His point was that if doubts and obscurities do become common-place, then the learning of rational argument to remove that doubt is an obligation. That is why he likened *Kalām* to medicine; a medicine that cures the mind from doubt, cynicism, scepticism and imparts certainty. In today's globalised world and in light of numerous campaigns by New Atheism to discredit belief in God—and more particularly Islam—*Kalām* must come to the forefront with its counter arguments.

1.8 RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

What is sometimes ignored—whether by believers in Islam or not—in any discussion of punishments for disbelief in the grave, is the punishment of a hypocrite compared with that of a doubter. What is mentioned in prophetic reports is that when the person is questioned in the grave regarding belief he will say, "I do not know; I just heard the people say things which I then said too." In response, the angels will rebuke him saying, "You never read and never understood."[22]

What such types of report highlight for us is the clear condemnation of religious hypocrisy—that of outward piety with inward disbelief.

Perhaps these are the type of hypocrites and conformists who turned many people away from the true path. Bertrand Russell mentions such types in his frank and honest autobi-

ography, recounting horrific things that a priest he knew did in his formative years. He concludes by saying that some of the greatest evil on Earth has been perpetrated by religious people. Roald Dahl, the children's writer, also claims in 'Boy: Tales of Childhood' that the beatings he received from supposedly religious people during his childhood led him to disbelieve in God.

There are countless examples of organised religions or cults in all societies where people who lack a real conviction in God or who are hypocrites carry out evil. Some atheists may say that the religion itself—and in the case of Islam the *Sharīʿa* or the Qurʾān—are to be blamed. Inevitably, the perpetrators of such evils would be, aside from the hypocrites, conformists or cultists. This is why hypocrisy is of two types.

The first type, religious hypocrisy, is where a person does not believe at all and knows he does not believe, but rather feigns religion for ulterior motives. The second type of hypocrisy is where a person remains a Muslim only through his parents being Muslim and not out of any conviction, as he might be Christian if he had been born to parents who were Christians. This is why rational theologians emphasise that the first divine obligation on every sane adult is investigation into the truth.

Discouraged by the above affirmation, some religious people will discourage others in turn into investigating anything since, they will be told, this leads to doubt. The correct theological position however is that investigation is the first obligation to remove doubt and the possibility of doubt. The harmful consequences of blind faith and fear of the unknown are such that when arguments are presented outside of their comfort zone, conformists will fall into doubt or cover up their doubt by becoming zealots. A worse-case scenario for

one who does not investigate would be, while in the throes of death, an argument or doubt comes to him which he is unable to respond to and thus, he dies in disbelief. This is why appearances can be deceiving. A person may seem religiously observant and pious, but inwardly be a hypocrite or a doubting Thomas, and subsequently die a non-Muslim, while the people of the world would be completely unaware of this. Conversely, you may have a person who is irreligious and then at the time of death or just before he dies discovers the truth and dies a believer, and again the people around him would be totally unaware. This is why mere mortals cannot say with certainty—of any individual—that he is going to Hell or is in Hell unless they have divine revelation to that effect. All we can say is that a person died as a Muslim or non-Muslim in terms of what we know regarding him, but that the final judgement is with God.

1.9 SALVATION THROUGH *KALĀM*

Some people at this juncture will wonder whether it is sufficient to follow the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition to attain salvation without rational theology. The response would be that the very belief in the Qur'ān and the truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ is based upon rationality and the rational conclusion that there is a God. Belief in the Qur'ān and Islam, necessitates the conclusion that a God exists and has sent down messengers and prophets with divinely revealed scripture. It may also be possible—rather it has occurred and continues to occur till this day—that people who may have knowledge of the Qur'ān and the prophetic way end up misinterpreting the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions simply because they have no depth in the rational sciences, Islamic legal theory,

rhetoric and grammar. In fact, many of the distortions of Islam are made by such people. They misinterpret the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions for ulterior motives, and though some may be sincere in their quest, due to their belief not being grounded in rational theology, they effectively misguide themselves and others.

Others claim that rather than learning about God through the rational process of *Kalām* and its ancillary sciences, it would be far better if a person engrossed himself in spiritual practices in the way mystics fight the desires of the lower carnal self by devoting themselves to God in such a manner to enlighten his soul, spirit, mind and heart. The response to this claim is that while curbing carnal desires is praiseworthy and the curing of the spiritual ailments of the heart a divinely ordained obligation, it is much hindered if the person is ignorant of the God being worshipped. To worship God, a person must know God with his mind and heart, know what is necessary for God, what is possible and impossible, alongside a minimum knowledge of essential divine attributes and the minimum proof for such beliefs. As well as these, a person must be able to repel any doubts that may occur, otherwise, such a worshipper who isolates himself for spiritual practises is no different to claimants of other faiths who believe they have attained enlightenment.

In reality, such people who are ignorant of the rational basis of belief in God are prone to claiming miracle making, superstition, imagination of visions in a wakeful state and dreams, and other elements of misguidance. Some eastern mystics claim that if the body is freed from its material desires then a person can reach enlightenment. But does this enlightenment conform to a knowledge that does not contradict the rational mind? If it does contradict rational thought, then it is not enlightenment but rather a satanic delusion or

a delusion of the ego. Anyone who rushes into spiritual practice without attaining the requisite knowledge first is in fact largely following a hidden desire, such as in many of the new age groups, or eastern mystical groups, or deviated Ṣūfī cults where that desire could be love of leader-ship, wealth, fame, notoriety or even a desire for miracles.

In fact, traditional Ṣūfīs warned against such people. Authentic, early Ṣūfī masters would first teach the adept rational proof for the existence of God and His divine attributes. One of the earliest and reliable books, 'al-Qushayrī's Epistle' [*al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*], starts with an elaboration of rational theology.

When miracles were related to such authentic Ṣūfīs they would dismiss them. It is related that Sahl b. ʿAbd Allah al-Tustarī was told of a man who when he performs the ritual ablution [*wuḍūʾ*], the water that trickled off his body turned into gold. Al-Tustarī responded by saying, "These are toys given to children to play with."[23]

Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī, a great Ṣūfī sage, was told of a man who apparently flew in the air and also walked on water. He responded by saying, "A house fly can fly and some sea creatures walk across water."[24]

The reason for this attitude was that in Islam a miracle could only be authentic in accordance with the claim, and the claim had to be made on rational terms. Miracles are generally understood as being a violation of the normal laws of physics and the material world occurring by divine will at the hands of a genuine claimant. But how does one judge that the claimant is genuine in the first place? The only way of checking if the claimant is genuine is by checking if the message and the claim make rational sense—that is the role of rational theology. The theologians have given names for such occur-

rences at the hands of charlatans.

By neglecting knowledge and rational theology, many people fall for erroneous concepts and consequently make wrong judgements, like believing that God is male, or that He can be contained in a particular direction, or bearing some resemblance to the creation, and various other fallacies that atheists make when debating the subject of God's divine existence. Many of the false notions that both theists and atheists have regarding God's divine attributes lead them to fall into the pitfalls of contradiction and subsequent scepticism. For such ailments, rational *Kalām* methodology is the cure. *Kalām* is a tool-kit for fixing broken arguments and dismantling fallacious arguments. A simple testimony of faith without understanding or knowledge of what is being uttered is condemnable as blind faith and a conformity, which will not guarantee salvation in the afterlife, especially if the person attesting that faith holds beliefs contradictory to Islam.

1.10 THE EMERGENCE OF DISPUTE

The position of total literalism vis-a-vis the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition—without recourse to legal theory and rational methodologies—started during the caliphate of ʿAlī ﷺ. A group of young men declared ʿAlī ﷺ and the rest of the Muslims as unbelievers and left the congregation of Muslims. This group was foretold of by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ who warned against young people in future generations who would read the Qur'ān but not let it enter their hearts even though they recited it melodiously, and that they would cite the narrations of the Prophet ﷺ, but due to a lack of intellect they would take up arms and resort to violence. This group was known as the Khawārij and it was the first divisive sect

to appear in Islam. They would interpret many things literally and citing sinful behaviour would declare many Muslims unbelievers. Although in Islam, sin does not nullify faith but weakens it, the Khawārij would declare the sinner an unbeliever. The Sunnī identification formed at that time, representing those who in contradistinction to the Khawārij ascribed to the traditional prophetic way.

A renowned student of the Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ was Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. He had settled in the city of Basra in Iraq after the killing of the Caliph ʿUthmān ﷺ, who had been murdered by a schismatic group from Egypt, after which, the Caliph ʿAlī ﷺ was selected as 'the Leader of the Faithful' [*amīr al-mu'minīn*] by the people.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī taught in the Mosque of Basra where during this period, many debates tackled difficult theoretical questions. On one occasion, a man approached Ḥasan and asked for clarity on the position of a sinner: was he a believer or an unbeliever? Before Ḥasan could respond, a student in the circle formulated an answer from his own mind and spoke out. Acknowledging that the Khawārij would typically declare a sinner an unbeliever while the remaining Muslims tended to declare that he remained a believer despite sinning, the man who spoke up posited a third position which amounted to 'a rank between the two ranks of belief and unbelief'—and he postulated that the sinner would end up in Hell but with a lesser punishment than the unbeliever.

The name of this man was Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā'. He later left the circle of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and formed his own circle with its own unique views on various issues. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said regarding Wāṣil, "He has left us," which in Arabic is, "*Iʿtazala ʿan-nā*." Subsequently, the sect of Wāṣil with its various offshoots became known as the Muʿtazila.[25]

1.11 THE MUʿTAZILA

The Muʿtazila are generally admired in western discourse because of their giving the intellect superiority over divine revelation. When Greek books were translated into Arabic—initially by Khālid b. Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, then later commissioned by the Caliph Māmūn, as well as many works translated by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq—the Muʿtazila adopted Greek thought and took many of their theological positions from Greek philosophy. This initiated intellectual debate on issues never previously debated in centres of learning like Baghdād; issues like, the inherent eternal nature of the universe, the phenomenon of evil, whether the Creator was obliged to reward and punish or not, the resurrection of material bodies, the nature of life after death, whether particles are encompassed in the knowledge of God, or if the mind is able to determine good and evil, and similar types of questions.

While the Abbasid caliphs remained Sunnī, there was no real persecution of the freedom to debate such matters, and so the Muʿtazila debated with Sunnī theologians in mosques throughout the caliphate. Not unique to the domain of theology, it was also occurring in other developing fields of literature, grammar, morphology, and Qurʾān recitation. Once the Muʿtazila were able to influence the caliphs however—especially Māmūn and Wāthiq—they started persecuting anyone who disagreed with them on the nature of the Qurʾān; whether it was God's speech, for example, and thus a divine attribute, or simply a creation of God.

The Muʿtazila, and indeed Muslims in general, had encountered the Eastern Christian church, and the point of dispute between them was over the divinity of Christ. To validate their view on this, the Christians made the argument

that Christ was divine because he was an attribute of God, in the way that the Qur'ān was an attribute of God according to Muslims and like Christ came down to Earth in the flesh. This was one of the many arguments forwarded by the Christians in places like Damascus and Alexandria. To avoid this ambiguousness, the Muʿtazila declared that God has no divine attributes, and whoever believed He had divine eternal attributes was a polytheist. In such a way Sunnī theologians were branded polytheists.

This is where *Kalām* came to hand and started becoming a tool for Sunnī theologians who adhered to tradition, and at the same time promoting rational arguments to counter the Muʿtazila narrative. The Sunnī rational theologians laid bare the inaccuracies of their opponents, whether Muʿtazila or Christians, by stating that the divine attribute of speech [*kalām*] was an attribute found established with the essence of God and not dwelling in creation as the Christians claimed. They established that the Qur'ān was the speech of God in the sense that it signifies the divine attributes, in the same way that the name of God when written down signifies the essence of God. That is to say when a person writes down the name of God on paper, the ink is not divine, the paper is not divine, and the reciter of the name of God is not divine, yet what is written and uttered signifies or infers the divine. Some Sunnī traditionalists, most notably Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, desisted from giving any elaborate explanation on these things, staying within the tradition.

The accounts of scholars within the Sunnī tradition who were subsequently persecuted severely are famous in the annals of history. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was prosecuted for his beliefs and had numerous debates with the chief Muʿtazilī of the time, Aḥmad b. Dāwūd and others. Once the caliphs returned to the Sunnī positions on these philosophical and theologi-

cal debates, the Muʿtazila sect nevertheless continued in the Muslim world not silenced by persecution or the sword, but rather vanquished by *Kalām*, the rational use of the mind to uphold tradition. The Muʿtazila were dealt intellectual blows from the likes of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and later Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (whose story of the old woman was related earlier).

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī was a Muʿtazilī disciple until he reached the age of forty. A student of the Muʿtazilī philosopher Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, he too held the position that God must do for an individual what is beneficial for that individual, and that it was an obligation on God to do so. The traditional Sunnī view, on the other hand, was that God was not obliged to do good or bad for the individual and did whatever He willed. The Muʿtazila's view avoided difficult questions like why God created evil, or whether humans created their own actions, and thus to avoid getting stuck they would, unlike the Sunnī, readily reformulate their creed.

One day, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī asked his teacher Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, "What do you say regarding three brothers, one of whom died obedient, another disobedient, and the third who died young?"

Al-Jubbāʾī replied, "The first will be rewarded in Paradise, the second will be punished in Hell, and the third will not be punished."

Al-Ashʿarī further enquired, "What if the third, the one who died young asked God why he made him die young, not keeping him alive so that he might have the chance to obey and thus enter Paradise. How would God respond?"

Al-Jubbāʾī replied, "God would say that He knew the boy would grow up to disobey Me and thereby enter Hell, so I did what was better for him." This reply was based on the rule

of the Muʿtazila that God must do what is of benefit to the individual.

In response to this, al-Ashʿarī said, "What if the second brother said, 'Why did you not make me die young, so as to have avoided disobeying you and consequently going to Hell?' How would God answer that?" This question so dumbfounded al-Jubbāʾī that he remained silent, unable to respond.[26]

After returning home, al-Ashʿarī went into isolation only to appear a few weeks later to renounce the Muʿtazila school and to adopt traditional Sunnī beliefs. Al-Ashʿarī went on to formulate the foundations of many later traditional responses to heresy and philosophical thinking, and this is the reason why the Sunnī theologians are sometimes referred to as the Ashāʿira.

1.12 THE MODERN ERA

New Atheism has not brought anything new to the discourse with the *Kalām* tradition. It has merely repackaged old arguments in new western philosophical and scientific jargon, no different from those debated between the Muʿtazila and traditional *Kalām* theologians long ago. The Muʿtazila questioned the eternal universe then as would an atheist today, citing Steven Hawking's multiverse theory in his popularised attempts to remove God from the picture and to replace Him with a theory that explains everything—a combination of quantum theory and relativity. A clear example of an antiquated argument is Antony Flew's 'God and Philosophy', where many of the objections he raises to the existence of God are based upon the same line of thinking as the Muʿtazi-

la. These arguments had largely died in the Muslim world due to the intellectual counter attack of the *Kalām* tradition, but they still hold sway over some western philosophers.

Even during the British colonial period in Egypt, when some of the clerics of the al-Azhar University were infected by western thinking after being exposed to old ideas in new language, an effective counter offensive was led by the likes of Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī who dealt a blow to New Atheism and its offshoots. Scientism took off in this period whereby people enamoured by new technologies and inventions began to regard religion as the source of technological backwardness. There was a move to reduce all truths to the arena of science, labelling old *Kalām* arguments as outdated and tautological. This new epistemological approach was the harbinger of New Atheism.

Science is neutral. Its fruits are reaped by those who invest in it, irrelevant of religion, culture, race or geographical location. Scientism, however, with all its scientific pretensions has hijacked science, ignoring its unchartered territories. This is not a criticism of the scientific method, but since it requires time, the very mortality of succeeding generations of researchers can only but limit the progression made by each generation. The false promise of Scientism, however, is for science to go beyond its scope of research and its limited contribution to human knowledge in how much science has actually uncovered. Currently, for example, only five to ten percent of all species on earth have been classified and named. That science has more progress to make is patently obvious. The very nature of science is trial and error, falsifiability and integrity. Humans can clearly know truths from other than science without contradicting science.

How well Wittgenstein described the deception of 'modernism' in that period; namely, the idea that laws of nature explain the world to us, when they merely describe structural realities. Such laws are descriptive and predictive but are laws that create nothing. In some cases these laws do not explain anything, thus incorrectly portraying that which indicates to nature as divine-like; since such laws are not creative or omniscient. Laws describe nature and as such do not create it, since they cannot exist prior to the very existence of the material they describe. So, what some atheist scientists do from the onset is to delineate the questions science is permitted to ask and to eliminate God from the picture because while science looks at the 'how' and 'why' to a degree, it does not question the purpose of something. Even human consciousness, that which is within us, has not been reduced to a scientific law. This is no faulting of science but an observation that the deifying of science and the scientific method is inherently flawed.

Even if the modern debate between Islam and atheism were not revolving around the domain of science and the assertion of Islam's scientific backwardness (see: Chapter 5), there is one domain which is dreaded by the Anglo-European or any bigoted detractor of Islam with their brand of atheism, and that is the *Sharīʿa*, the law of Islam and the governance of Islam. Those who find the *Sharīʿa* disagreeable will assemble their arguments to renounce belief in God and Islam largely through their disagreement with Islamic law. This singular issue has politicised the debate between Islam and atheism. Therefore, the debate today with atheism is entangled with political issues, ranging from domestic abuse in Saudi Arabia and its unique interpretation of *Sharīʿa* law, to suicide bombers in already destabilised countries.

These arguments can range from the non-sequitur to the totally irrelevant. When, recently, a Saudi woman fled the domestic abuse of her family, after taking asylum in Canada, the headline reads:

> "Saudi teen granted asylum in Canada makes the most of her new life—eating bacon for breakfast and grabbing a Starbucks coffee with her legs exposed."

The above headline highlights the xenophobic rhetoric being fuelled by major news corporations to evoke emotive responses from both sides. As well as that, such headlines instil fear in the mind of the reader, illustrating an alien community or cult which seeks to remove their freedoms. Similar accounts of propaganda were seen in Nazi Germany when Jewish communities were maligned and marginalised from the population, to be seen as the common enemy.

This recalls another incident where a woman leaves Islam for cultural reasons (obviously random cultures like the old Saudi law banning women from driving are to be found mixed in with Islam). Trying to convince her sister to leave Islam, the best proof that she could furnish was, "Then you can eat whatever you want," in reference to the dietary restrictions of Islamic law. That those dietary laws may be there for our own well-being can hardly impinge on such a 'proof'.

This ongoing war of words, alongside the wars on terrorism and counter terrorism, are to be found not only in New Atheism but have roots in the religious fanaticism of Charles Martel, the Crusades and later the imperial powers that developed from the wealth of Muslim Mughal India and Black Africa. The philosophies that are found with this undercurrent may shift, but the same attitude remains. From exporting

Christianity to Muslims, Blacks and natives of 'new lands', to the deliberate spread of neo-Liberal and Humanist ideas to the Muslim world all the while disparaging their entire tradition as inferior, backward and unfit for the modern world, it is inevitable that what is modern and what is barbaric is determined by the Anglo-European power structure. The attitudes are the same today as they were when Prime Minister Gladstone of Britain is reported to have said in Parliament, holding up a copy of the Qur'ān in his hand, "So long as the Egyptians have got this book with them, we will never be able to enjoy quiet or peace in that land."

In his memoirs, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣabbāgh devoted a number of chapters to the principles in which he believed. He wrote:

> "I do not believe in the democracy of the English, the Nazism of the Germans, or the Bolshevism of the Russians. I am a Muslim Arab, and for me there is no substitute for this among all the views and philosophies; I want no comparison or preference among them as this is sterile and meaningless, for wherever I turn, I see the foreign wolf preying upon and torturing my nation—in the Mediterranean, Oman, the Persian Gulf, in the heart of the Arabian peninsula and near the tomb of the Prophet [ﷺ].
>
> There is no more murderous wolf for the Arabs and no deadlier foe of Islam than Britain. As for the Arabs, they have been torn apart into small countries, communities and tribes that fight each other [...] If Arabs seeking freedom, rise up in Palestine, Egypt, Aden, the seven shaykhdoms and Iraq, the guillotine is sharpened for them and bombers are loaded with fire.
>
> Three hundred and fifty million Muslims are still groaning under the yoke of British imperialism. The bloody 'Lion-Heart' of the Crusaders' wars was an Englishman and so was Allenby, who conquered Jerusalem and said, 'Now

> the Crusades are over,' as was Gladstone who threw the Qur'ān into a closet and said, 'There will be no quiet in the world as long as this remains,' as indeed was Cromer who said, 'Only this Qur'ān impedes civilization.'"[27]

Even Antony Flew, after having renounced atheism, when questioned on the nature of God as he saw it said, "I am thinking of a God very different from the God of the Christians and far and away from the God of Islam, because both are depicted as omnipotent Oriental despots, cosmic Saddam Husseins."[28] Flew's perspective, it would seem, was born because of the Anglo-European attitude toward divinely revealed law and the nightmare of what Europe experienced under the Roman Catholic church, its interpretation of the Christian faith, and its various persecutions and inquisitions even on those who believed in Jesus Christ. But the view regarding Islam is deep rooted in old Anglo-European derision and phobia of Islam, the Moor, the Saracen, the Turk and other nightmares of the past. Flew said in regard to Islam that it is "best described in a Marxian way, as the uniting and justifying ideology of Arab imperialism."

1.13 FIFTEEN ATHEISTIC FALLACIES

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When discussing Islam in general—or the *Sharīʿa* specifically—one often encounters some common fallacies presented by Atheists, former Muslims or any detractors of Islam. Herewith are presented fifteen of those fallacies. The reader can take note of these and consider those making them:

1 • *Generalising something which is specific.* If a person cites a verse of the Qur'ān that has specific application to

an event or a ruling given in a specific situation but then generalises the application, then he has fallen into this fallacy. This can happen with a prophetic report [*ḥadīth*] as well. Commonly, this occurs with regard to verses on the military code of warfare as related in Chapters Eight and Nine of the Qur'ān that relate to certain historical settings yet always cited by detractors of Islam and literalists who invoke some tendency of Muslims to resort to violence.

2 • *Specifying something which is general.* There may be something general, a rule which is general, and the atheist may commit the fallacy of ascribing specificity to it. For instance, a general prophetic injunction states, "Do not kill women and children (non-combatants) in war." Witnessing the actions of present day terrorist organisations, an atheist might be tempted to believe that this prohibition was specific and not general, thus assuming that the legal floodgates were left open for such organisations to exploit.

3 • *Additions which are not in the original.* This is where general statements in the Qur'ān and prophetic statements are added to, creating a fallacy not found in the original statement.

4 • *Hiding conditions and limits which change the context.* This can happen when quoting a legal ruling verse of the Qur'ān, like those regarding the amputation of the hand of a thief, for example.

5 • *Using quotes without the previous or following text.* This happens often with the verses of *Jihād*. Once a Christian came to a local mosque to debate with me. The debate lasted a few weeks and the first topic was *Jihād* and violence in the Qur'ān. Together, we placed the entire verses of the Qur'ān relating to *Jihād* together, and on seeing the true context, he dropped his entire argument relating to *Jihād*. Then the verses

of the Bible were scrutinised with regard to violence and he was challenged to place those verses in their proper context which he was unable to do so, rather saying that those verses were from the Old Testament while the verses of mercy were from the New Testament. This is despite the fact that there are verses of violence in the New Testament that many Christians remain ignorant of (as in Luke 19:27) and the point was lost on him. Instead, the point was made that the god of the Old and New Testaments is the same god, and therefore the same one commanding the killings of innocent women, children and even animals (Isaiah 13:9-16, or Judges 18:1-28, or 1 Samuel 15:3 and numerous other passages). On the other hand, with the Qur'ān he could not validate his claims when the verses relating to *Jihād* were placed in context.

6 • *Playing with the meaning of the text to establish a point.* The meaning may be clear but sometimes a person may attempt to change the meaning in order to make a point—another kind of fallacy. In one debate, a woman tried asserting that the Qur'ān legislated child marriage and in so doing quoted a particular verse. When the verse was recited it was clear that it had no such meaning. The verse reads, ﴾*And those who no longer expect menstruation among your women, if you doubt, then their period is three months, and (also for) those who have not menstruated. And for those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth. And whoever fears Allah—He will make for him of his matter ease*﴿ [Qur'ān 65:4]. The part regarding 'those who have not menstruated' was being coerced to mean something other than in the text.

7 • *The straw man fallacy.* A well-known fallacy where a presumption is made and then attacked according to the disputant's own devices.

8 • *Using an isolated aberrant opinion or an anomalous juristic opinion [ijtihād] and applying that to Islam as a whole. Ijtihād* signifies a difference of opinion amongst scholars on a given point, and each scholar will exert his efforts to infer the correct judgement. In some cases, a person totally unqualified in clerical scholastic training will be put forward as a scholar of Islam, a favourite ploy of many detractors of Islam, especially when such a person may hold violent or extremist viewpoints.

9 • *Using the position of a sect within Islam as the given position of Islam.* The given position of Islam would be an unequivocal verse from the Qur'ān in the due terms of what it alludes to, a prophetic narration that is mass transmitted and has never been rejected by Muslims as a whole, along with the consensus-based positions of all Muslims. The given position of one sect cannot be presented as the position of Islam because Islam was, and is, a free religion. The greatest evidence of this freedom was during the first two hundred years of Islam when the number of sects exceeded the number of sects there are today. The mosques of Kufa and Basra were filled with various groups debating different theological points. There were thus a variety of views on issues, none of which could be cited as the default position of Islam.

10 • *Texts attributed without verification.* For the present purpose, a single example is cited and is then appropriately critiqued:

> In 640 CE the Muslims took the city of Alexandria. Upon learning of 'a great library containing all the knowledge of the world', the conquering general supposedly asked Caliph 'Umar for instructions. The Caliph has been quoted as saying of the Library's holdings, "They will either contradict the Qur'ān, in which case they are heresy, or they will agree

> with it, so they are superfluous." So, allegedly, all the texts were destroyed and used as fuel for the bathhouses of the city. Even then it was said to have taken six months to burn all the documents.[29]

These details, from the Caliph's instruction to the unconvincing six months it supposedly took to burn all the books, were not written down until 300 years after the event. These facts condemning Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ were written by Bishop Gregory Bar Hebræus, a Christian who spent a great deal of time writing about Muslim atrocities without much historical documentation.

Verification for Muslim scholarship would require looking at the transmitters of any report and their biographies, and verifying whether the chain of narration was unbroken. Citations in historical books is not sufficient evidence to establish historical fact, with mass-transmission of an occurrence being needed or a clear chain of transmission that can be scrutinised. Unlike modern archaeology where remnants of historical artefacts will be found and deductions, or inductions, will be made from those, the Muslim Ḥadīth methodology of narrators, biographies, the checking of synchronic layers of narrators and narrator reliability along with accreditation and discreditation amounts to a much more accurate method of imparting certainty.

11 • *Hiding or sheer ignorance of valid texts.* In an attempt to make the claim that Islam permits violence or curtails the rights of other groups, certain citations may be made from the Qur'ān or prophetic traditions, while at the same time the verses or traditions that contradict that claim may be hidden on purpose or through pure ignorance.

12 • *Science is based upon atheism.* This fallacy attempts to make an intrinsic link with atheism and science, when in reality the vast majority of scientists in the past have been theists, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Science is neutral.

13 • *The red-herring or 'the side trimming'.* This is when one thing is being discussed and the interlocutor brings up something else which is totally irrelevant to the issue at hand.

14 • *Appeal to popularity or authority.* If something is popular it does not make it factual. Likewise, in Islam there is no Pope-like authority, and the authority of a Caliph or a Muftī is limited in scope as they do not make the law or creed. Islam has already been expounded in the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition, while the roles of later authority figures are limited to a few things. The Muftī of Saudi Arabia or the Ayatollah of Iran cannot be cited as authorities.

15 • *Misusing words.* A word can be totally taken out of its true import, either out of ignorance or just to win an argument.

This happened once in a debate when a Christian woman said, "Allah worships the Prophet because the Qur'ān says so." She quoted the following verse: ﴾*Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels* (*ask Him to do so*). *O you who have believed, ask* (*Allah to confer*) *blessing upon him and ask* (*Allah to grant him*) *peace*﴿ [Qur'ān 33:56].

She contested that the Arabic word '*Yuṣallūna*' could only mean prayer, not carrying any other meaning. Of course, this was sheer ignorance of Arabic and when that was pointed out she conceded that Arab Christians all held a similar view. They were falling into this fallacy because earlier in the same chapter the verse reads: ﴾*It is He who confers blessing upon you, and His angels* (*ask Him to do so*) *that He may bring you out from darknesses into the light. And ever is He, to the*

believers, Merciful} [Qur'ān 33:43]. In this verse the same verb is used and is meant to confer blessings and not the act of worship. Despite evidence produced from lexicons and dictionaries, the point was not accepted and the contradictory position was maintained.

*"When I think of the most able students
I have encountered in my teaching—I mean
those who have distinguished themselves not
only by skill but by independence of thought—
then I must confess that all have had a lively
interest in epistemology."*

—Albert Einstein

CHAPTER TWO
Epistemology

2.1 THE MEANING & IMPORTANCE OF EPISTEMOLOGY

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THE IMPORTANCE OF how we reach a conclusion can never be understated. In philosophical terms this is referred to as epistemology. This word is derived from the Greek *episteme*, meaning knowledge. A description of anything must have some relation to knowledge, and for any belief or proposition to be described as being 'epistemic' it must be justifiable on a rational basis.

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge, the foundation of knowledge, its scope and applicability. Many have occupied themselves with epistemology in order to justify a philosophical position or theological stance. It could be described as an attempt to provide a general basis that would ensure a basis for knowledge. Many of the religious and philosophical debates we read and hear about have their roots in how conclusions are reached. If the method of deriving knowledge and ascertaining facts is the same, then the parallel lines of difference can start from a common point of departure and the gap can be shortened depending on the type of dispute. If, however, the differences relate to the very definition of knowledge, certainty or near certainty, with the

criteria for ascertaining facts covering a broad range of other things, then the starting point will be different and the gap widened.

If two disputants, in any science or discussion, fail to agree on basic terms and their definitions, or the linguistic implications thereof, then they will not agree on more pertinent or salient subjects. With any discussion regarding theism and Islam and its counter narrative of atheism and its ancillaries, it is essential to present the reader with a method to derive certain knowledge of there being a divine creator.

Additionally, subsequent disputes, inquiries, objections and misunderstandings will always lead back to the base method of ascertaining knowledge and key principles, with resulting impasse, hair-splitting or emotive argumentation lacking any rational substance. Therefore, when engaging with our atheist interrogators, it is essential that a valid epistemology is defined. In a more thorough discussion, the epistemology should be justified through rational means, and even if the interlocutor is not convinced, at least he will be clear as to how that conclusion was derived. The origins and basis of the dispute stand on how that conclusion was formulated, hence its importance to the entire debate.

What is intended now is to present a clear and concise method of thinking to enable any reader to analyse any proposition or methodology being presented. Towards the end, a definition of some of the basic underlying philosophical foundations of western atheism and its colonial offshoots will be defined for the reader to make up their mind as to which of the two stand up to scrutiny.

2.2 DOES KNOWLEDGE ITSELF NEED DEFINING?

Knowledge is self-evident and self-evident concepts by their very nature do not need a definition. If they required a definition, this would be difficult and irrationally retrogressive—difficult because not practical, and irrational because a regression of definitions would be the result. Such would be the impracticality. It would lead to never being able to define any single thing, simply because every single, self-evident fact would need a definition, and within those definitions each word and concept would also need a definition, with every word or concept in those definitions also needing a definition, *ad infinitum*, albeit those concepts or words were self-evident.

The only way of resolving such a conundrum is by taking the common sense approach of accepting that there are things that do not need to be defined as they are self-evident to every rational, sane human being. Furthermore, it can be added, that by not adopting the commonsensical approach to self-evident matters, nothing would ever be defined nor debates resolved. No syllogism or its premises could ever be accepted by those who deny that self-evident subjects need not be defined, as then it would be demanded that every part of any given argument be defined and then too the very parts of those definitions. Debating in this way with people would be futile and fruitless, as nothing would ever be defined and no argument concluded. Therefore, it has to be accepted that there are certain things that do not have to be defined.

Knowledge is self-evident because all of us have knowledge of something and know of its certainty, and by knowing that we know something means that knowledge itself is self-evident. We know our own names or the names of others, or the

country of our birth or upbringing, or our ages, and things of a similar nature. The fact that you, the reader, are reading these lines and cognizant of what you are reading—just knowing that you can read—makes knowledge self-evident.

Our definitions, propositions, syllogisms and premises would all have to consist of many self-evident concepts, facts and even abstract ideas, not needing any definition through being self-evident, without which no debate could ever be concluded. The continual insistence on asking for definitions would imply that substantiated self-evident facts, not needing definition, do exist, otherwise nothing would ever be proven or substantiated.

2.3 JUDGEMENTS

The judgements we give regarding any given subject will always be preceded by concepts and an understanding of those concepts. If one were to say: "Tom is standing," it means the articulator has understood who 'Tom' is and what 'standing' is, but what he did with those two concepts is add a judgement and make a connection between the two. Therefore, a judgement would be defined as affirmation of something or its negation, or affirming or negating a given predicate to a subject, like: "Tom is intelligent" or "Tom is not intelligent." Any type of judgement we give in any given subject is an affirmation or negation of something.

The truthfulness of a judgement is dependent on which epistemology is used in ascertaining that truth. Any inductive process aids the categorisation of these judgements into a neat and uniform manner. This inductive process can be rational or investigative. For example, a rational inductive process

would be to categorise all words into verbs, nouns and particles, or to categorise all numbers into odds and evens. Similarly, an investigative inductive process on animals might observe how animals ate and concluded that all animals eat by moving the lower jaw. This, of course, can be falsified by the fact that crocodiles eat by moving their upper jaw. Such classifications of judgements would be called inductive rational classifications.

A judgement affirming something for something else or negating something in relation to something else, can either conceivably change or not. If decided that it is not prone to change then that is a rational judgement, which will be explicated further below. If it is prone to change or could conceivably change, then this judgement is either from the observance of empirical phenomena or the designation of a founder. The former is a habitual judgement, or we can say an empirical judgement, while the latter is a legal or axiomatic judgement.

Let us break things down a little further for clarity's sake. Think of any judgement. If you say 'I am sitting,' your current status of sitting is prone to change, as you could easily stand up. That would mean this judgement is one of the two categories mentioned above—either empirical or by someone's design. Since we know that your sitting is a judgement derived from observation and sense perception, we can confidently say that your statement 'I am sitting' is an empirical judgement. This type of analysis can be carried out with regard to any judgement. Judgements will always ever be one of the three stated above.

The importance of these judgements lies in the fact that they safeguard one from error in any philosophical or theological thinking. By knowing them, a person will be able to analyse any claim or argument, as well as the various types

of proofs or assumed proofs (to be covered later).

With regard to rational judgement alone, al-Juwaynī— the teacher of al-Ghazālī—stated that anyone who does not know it has no intellect[30]. However, some like al-Sharqāwī and al-Dasūqī disputed Imām al-Juwaynī's reasoning on the grounds that many philosophers knew the rational judgements yet did not have rational beliefs. They alternatively defined intellect as a spiritual light[31].

So, any judgement given will fall into one of these three types. What are of greatest concern to this discussion are the habitual, or empirical judgements, and rational judgements.

2.4 EMPIRICAL JUDGEMENTS

Empirical judgements denote the linkage between two things by observation and the existence or non-existence of something thereby. Such a judgement is formulated by observation of repeated phenomena, even if observed only twice, like when a match lights up when rubbed on a hard or rough surface, or when fire burns paper. Just by the observing of the link between two things can a judgement be formed. However, at the same time, the link between the existent and the effect—like fire and heat—can be disengaged and the absence of cause and effect be instantiated. In other words, it is the establishment of a linkage for the existence or non-existence of an entity that coincides with the existence or non-existence of another entity, like the absence of food in the stomach is linked to hunger, and the presence of food in the stomach is linked to the existence of satiation.

This particular judgement has no recourse to the mind, which solely formulates this judgement. Neither is it desig-

nated by a founder nor is it an axiomatic principle or law. It is simply interconnecting two things and forming a judgement. Such an empirical judgement could be of four types; the existence of a thing being linked with existence of another thing, the absence of a thing being linked to the absence of another thing, the link of an existent thing with a non-existent or absent thing, or the link of an absent or non-existent thing with an existent thing.

It is always good to move from a difficult-to-grasp abstract to the tangible realm of a material example to simplify the seemingly complicated.

An example of the existent with the existent, is the existence of food in the stomach with the existence of satiety.

The absence of a thing with the absence of another would be like the absence of food linked to the absence of satiety.

An existent being linked to an absent would be like the existence of hunger being linked to the absence of food.

Finally, an absent being linked to an existent would be like the absence of hunger being linked to the presence of food.

What is also important to note is that the link between two observable phenomena is not rationally necessary and as stated above, the link can be disengaged. It is important to make a mental note of this as it will help in later discussions.

2.5 RATIONAL JUDGEMENTS

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A rational judgement emanates solely from the mind or rational faculty and does not depend on observation of external phenomena. An example would be understanding that the number one is half of two, or understanding that

every solid body fills a void.

When a rational judgement is formulated, it will and can only be one of three categories. It will either be necessary, impossible, or possible. The reason for this limitation to three as opposed to any other number is that the judgement will either never accept non-existence, or never accept existence, or could possibly accept both existence and non-existence. There can be no further possibilities, nor any less.

An example of this would be, movement and stillness in relation to any material object. It is rationally necessary for an object to be either moving or still—it would have to be one of the two. It is rationally impossible for an object to be moving and still at the same time. Finally, it is rationally possible for an object to either be moving or still, as any one of the two options at a given time is possible.

To summarise, there are three rational judgements: the necessary, the impossible and the possible. These judgements are solely formulated from the mind. Someone who is blind from birth could give the above cited example of movement and stillness, due to their rational faculty, without any reference to the earlier illustrated empirical judgement. It is possible, however, that an empirical judgement contravenes the norm and the supposed law be suspended, like fire ceasing to burn, even if this may be a rare occurrence.

Empirical judgements can be falsified, but not rational judgements. Rational judgements are rational considerations given in regard to anything that may or may not exist, unlike empirical judgements which relate to the tangible, material and empirical realm.

2.6 CATEGORISATION OF EMPIRICAL & RATIONAL JUDGEMENTS

Empirical and rational judgements will be either conceptual or confirmatory. Then each one of these two will be either intuitive or theoretical. The intuitive or the theoretical can either be intrinsically necessary or extrinsically necessary. Then the intrinsically necessary and the extrinsically necessary are either negative or affirmative. In total, that makes eight categories and if we accept that we are discussing two judgement types—the empirical and the rational—that would make sixteen judgements. If we were to consider the third type of judgment, the designated or legal judgement, it would make twenty-four types, however that is not relevant at this point and will not be elaborated.

An example of a conceptual empirical judgement is our understanding of food and drink. We understand the meaning of food and drink and what they entail without any need for a confirmatory sentence. An example of a confirmatory empirical judgement would be, 'food is nutritive but soil is not'.

An intuitive empirical judgement would be 'clothing covers' or 'fire burns paper', for example. However, a theoretical empirical judgement would be 'antiseptic kills bacteria'.

An intrinsically necessary empirical judgement would denote usage of grammar or the requirements of language. An extrinsic necessary judgement would include habitual customs, like the observed requirement of judges in the United Kingdom to wear wigs.

All of the above mentioned empirical judgements will be either affirmative or negative. The affirmative example

already cited is 'fire burns paper', or additionally 'knives cut meat'. An example of a negative empirical judgement would be 'raw meat is not digested easily'.

An example of a conceptual rational judgement would be what we understand of the universe when it is mentioned. The mind is sufficient to understand what is actually meant by the universe. However, there is no confirmation of this rational judgement.

A confirmatory rational judgement, however, is rationalising the contingent nature of the universe, or the eternal nature of the divine. Such judgements are arrived at after theoretical study; an atheist concluding with the rational assertion that the universe is eternal yet without a creator.

An intuitive rational judgement would be like rationalising that one is half of two, or rationalising and intuitively understanding that solid bodies have loci. However, a theoretical rational judgement would be to encompass something like the number one being one tenth of a quarter of forty.

An intrinsically necessary rational judgement would be the very existence of God for theists, and its intrinsic impossibility for atheists.

An extrinsically necessary rational judgement would be the existence of creation for example, as it is not intrinsically necessary that it exist in essence, but extrinsically, necessarily must exist. Atheists may disagree by saying that it is intrinsically necessary. The point here is to show that the categories of rational judgements are irrelevant to what we may place under those categories.

All of the above rational judgements will either be affirmative or negative. An example of the affirmative would be to rationalise the fact that the number ten is an even number. An

example of a negative rational judgement would be to rationalise the fact that the number seven is not a prime number.

On a side note, it would be good to add the various types of affirmation and negation. An existent can be affirmed to an existent, like affirming knowledge to God. Knowledge is an existent reality and God, for theists, is an existing reality; the first existent affirmed by the second.

There is also the affirmation of a non-existent for a non-existent, like the rational impossibility of a co-partner with God according to monotheists. A rational impossibility by its definition is that which cannot be conceived in the mind of existing in the external realm. A rational impossibility is a non-existent. In this example, a non-existent—which is the rational impossibility—is being affirmatively ascribed to a non-existing co-partner with God.

Then there is the affirmation of a non-existent to an existent, like the affirmative rational judgement of contingency to the universe. A contingent is something that may potentially exist after non-existence, momentarily in some cases, then going out of existence, like movement or motionlessness. Therefore, contingency as a potential is a non-existent entity but is affirmatively ascribed to the existing universe.

Affirmational ascription of something existent to a non-existent is not found anywhere.

Negation will also have types, like negating something existent from something existent; for example, negating ignorance from God. Again, negating the non-existent from the non-existent, like negating ignorance from a non-existing co-partner with God. Then there is the negation of an existent thing being ascribed to a non-existent thing, like negation of knowledge from a non-existing co-partner to God. Finally, there is the negation of an absent from an existent, like the

negation of contingency from God.

The connection between things is one of three types. Either a connection of signification, or a connection of uncovering, or a connection of effect. An example of the first would be speech, writing, road signs and anything that connects by signifying something. The second type, which is the connection that uncovers realities, is like knowledge, sight, hearing, and comprehension, and anything that connects by revealing realities. The third type, which is the connection of effectiveness, is like power, strength and the will-power to do something. These points are important to bear in mind as they unravel many seemingly knotty problems when it comes to deeper philosophical questions.

2.7 CERTAINTY & TYPES OF PROOF

Proofs are something that impart certainty for individuals. However, depending on the type of proof, the degree of certainty will vary. Absolute certainty is that which is in accordance with reality and the knowledge thereof is not prone to change. This is the type of knowledge that especially concerns us when we discuss the existence of God. Other categories of interest are near certainty, possibility and doubt. That makes four categories. Added to these could be blind conformity and ignorance, since a blind conformist or an ignorant person may think they have knowledge of something, but these two categories will not be included because the knowledge they claim is in fact no knowledge at all.

Certainty is that fact that our knowledge regarding it is not prone to any change. We have certainty regarding many things, like the fact that Paris, today and in the recent past, is

the capital of France; that the Roman empire extended across Europe and parts of the world throughout history; that Alexander was from Macedonia and established Alexandria in Egypt; your own date of birth or what you ate earlier. Even the fact that you are reading this book. But believe it or not, there are many people who dispute facts such as these. There are people who doubt many things that we take for granted, the sole reason being that they have a flawed epistemology. Later on, we will take a look at the methodology of some of these flawed epistemologies and do a cross comparison with the types of proof that actually impart certainty.

A possibility arises when there is potential of two scenarios. It is possible that Tom is learned, but it is also possible that he is not learned. When Tom displays his knowledge, we reach near certainty that Tom is learned, and if he displays ignorance, then we begin to doubt whether Tom is learned at all. Many things that we hear or read fall into the realm of possibility, but with corroborating information, they near certainty, while if information discredits that possibility, then it becomes doubtful. This makes it essential that rational and empirical judgements be understood first, since whatever falls into the category of a rational impossibility would not be entertained in the first place, while everything that is a rational possible will provoke the weighing of evidence. If the evidence favours the possibility, then it becomes nearer to certainty while if it goes against it, it becomes doubtful. This categorisation is vital so that in Chapter Four when we analyse philosophical objections to God like, 'Can God create a boulder so heavy that He cannot pick it up? If He cannot then He is not All-powerful, and if He can then He is powerless', it will be realised why such objections are flawed, even though initially confounding. Similarly so, in Chapter Five when we discuss the scope and certainty imparted by science and its

cross comparison with scripture.

Many things fall into the category of rationally possible, but due to a lack of evidence they are deemed doubtful, though not impossible. At the same time, there are many things deemed rationally possible, that with additional evidence may draw them close to near certainty and in some cases absolute certainty.

Do aliens exist? It is rationally possible but highly doubtful according to most through a lack of evidence. Did giants exist? Again, it is rationally possible but highly doubtful due to a lack of evidence. Did man land on the moon? It is rationally possible and it indeed occurred to the satisfaction of an overwhelming majority of people based on the evidence. Like this, you can answer numerous questions and categorise the answers into one of the four categories; certain, near certain, possible, or doubtful. At the same time, we could add the additional category of rationally impossible.

Nevertheless, the main question is what types of proof actually impart certainty? The methods of rationalising and reasoning on any given subject are so many, that if we were to enumerate them, the list would be endless. Syllogistic reasoning, for instance, has so many forms but it does not always impart certainty even if the form of the reasoning is correct. Likewise, a thorough and correct method of reasoning or investigation will not always lead to certainty. It would be wrong to say this was because the method was incorrect, or the form of the argument, rather it is generally because the content of the argument is fallacious or fails to impart certainty. It could be said the substance of the argument is incorrect or insufficient. An essential question at this juncture is what aspect of an argument contains the proof that imparts certainty?

2.8 PROOFS THAT IMPART CERTAINTY

Certainty is acquired through the intellect or the senses, or a combination of both, and this is because comprehension and attainment of knowledge is limited to these two faculties. When we utilise the intellect alone as a proof to impart certainty, we can apprehend that knowledge immediately or it may require thought. If it requires no thinking then it accords to basic fundamentals, a priori data, or premises that have the status of first principles. These are propositions inherent in the intellectual faculty of man, like the laws of thought, for example. However, if the matter requires thinking to reach a conclusion, which is certain nevertheless, then this is termed as an assertive statement or proposition (or we could say a rational proposition). These two proofs fall within the domain of rational judgements as covered previously.

Use of the senses alone, without the use of the rational mind, is called perceptible or observable phenomena. If there is a combination, the rational faculty with the sensory perception, then there are three ways by which certainty can be attained. If the knowledge attained is through the intellect and hearing being the only sensory perception, then this is referred to as mass transmission. If, however, certainty is attained through the intellect and other sense perceptions, there will be two scenarios; either one requiring repetition of the sense perception for the intellect to reach certainty, or one that does not. The former is the empirical judgement discussed earlier in this chapter, while the latter is the intuitive. In total that makes six types of proofs that impart certainty. Henceforth, we shall take a closer look at each one of these proofs, though they will be presented in a slightly modified order.

Fundamentals

Fundamentals, also known as the primary intelligible, or first principles that are self-evident and a priori, are like the axioms of mathematics or fundamental laws.

These fundamentals are concepts easily understood by children. If you give a child two sweets and the child cries, resulting in you giving him a third sweet which makes him happy, he has clearly understood the basic fundamental that you have increased his share by one. Likewise, there are many other a priori judgements that we do not need additional proof for, like the statements, 'one is half of two', or 'the whole of something is larger than its part', or 'an object cannot be moving and still at the same time', or 'no solid body can have two distinct colours on the same point at the same time'. These are fundamentals that are understood without further thinking, that emanate solely from the mind without any recourse to further thinking or sensory perception.

Perceptible or Observable Phenomena

These are proofs arrived at by the senses, like the assertion that the sun is rising. The sun's rising is perceived by the eyes; or the perception of fire burning, by the ability to smell; or the ability to smell a rose, or taste honey, or hear a sound.

As for internal sensual feelings like hunger or anger, they provide proof for the individual but may only be perceived by others through hallmarks and tell-tale signs, which do not necessarily impart certainty to the onlooker.

The Empirical

This has been covered in detail earlier. It is the mind and

senses observing a phenomenon repeatedly until certainty arrives at an empirical judgement, like the conclusion made by scientists that bactericidal antiseptic kills bacteria.

The Intuitive

Intuitive certainty is attained through observation and the senses, as with the empirical, except that the imparting of the certain knowledge is attained quicker and does not require repetition or experimentation, as the observer recognises it intuitively, that is, by an immediate inference or mental illumination that apprehends the necessary connection between the premises and conclusions of observable things. An example would be the fact that the moon reflects the light of the sun at various degrees which causes it to wax and wane. This does not need a scientific experiment or multiple repetitive observations.

Mass Transmission

This is in reference to mass transmitted facts that are not necessarily rational, nor rationally impossible, but in fact relate to physical events which are rationally possible, even if improbable, that have been related by a multitude of people who witnessed the events and related them to other groups of people in turn, to an extent which would make it rationally impossible for a conspiracy of collusion.

An irrational fact, even if related by a multitude of people, cannot give us certitude. What is meant by an irrational fact is that the mind cannot judge as to its possible existence, like the paradoxical state of movement and motionlessness at the same time for a solid body. This has already been covered above in the exposition on rational judgements. The exclusion

of rational judgements is because this category of proof refers to physical extra-mental events. Many things in history and in current events reach us through this type of transmission and we know these things with certainty. This category of proof is essential to know when discussing miracles, or the suspension of natural laws and how we determine the veracity of such events.

Rational Propositions

This category is that of rational judgements which involve propositions that require syllogistic thinking to reach a conclusion. An example of this type of proposition is: 'Four is an even number'. It is when the mind reaches the conclusion that four is an even number through a syllogistic train of thought; any number that divides evenly is an even number—four divides evenly—therefore, four is an even number.

The six categories covered are those things that impart certainty in knowledge. It would be beneficial at this point to turn our attention to those things which do not impart certainty but are utilised by some to validate their argument. The purpose of analysing such non-conclusive forms of argumentation is to make a distinction between those which impart certainty and those which do not impart certainty, allowing the observer to discern between the two and evaluate the argument correctly.

Disputations based on famous assumptions, great oratory based on accepted norms, poetic licence, or fallacious arguments which are mere sophistry are examples of arguments presented to furnish a proof but which do not in actual fact lead to any certainty.

2.9 DISPUTATION BASED ON FAMOUS ASSUMPTION OR FALLACIES

Phrases like: 'Justice is good' and 'Oppression is bad', or 'All humans are brothers', and other assertive statements are likely types of argumentation based on a presumed fact. They are not necessarily wrong and can give some certainty, but unlike the six proofs discussed above, they do not always impart knowledge or near certainty. This form of argument can be advanced to soften the heart or convince a person, like saying, 'Kindness to the poor is praiseworthy.'

A group of people may despise an act just because it is generally unacceptable and may be convinced if this form of argument is utilised. In India, for example, slaughtering a cow is detestable to most Hindus and this is widely accepted. In certain parts of India, if a Muslim decides to slaughter a cow to eat, he may well be killed or burned alive along with his family and home. The rallying cry used to convince mobs to carry out such vigilante attacks might well be the famously accepted argument that slaughtering cows is despicable, despite the paradoxical fact that India remains one of the biggest exporters of beef today.

In some societies, nakedness is frowned upon and in some countries punishable. An argument against someone who carries out a public display of nudity could be: 'Nudity is frowned upon; therefore, anyone who displays public nudity is contemptable'. Such a form of argumentation might convince people within that society but it does not add up to absolute certainty.

NOTE: The distinction between the above famous assumptions and the previously discussed rational fundamentals is that rational fundamentals are based solely upon the intel-

lect, while famous assumptions not necessarily so. This means that some rational judgements can be common assumptions but not necessarily. Disputation relying on common assumptions is often the attempt to convince the interlocutor or others without having to resort to the six methods of certainty.

2.10 ORATORY BASED ON ACCEPTED NORMS

This type of oratory may convince people who already have a good opinion of something or someone. If someone says, 'Mother Teresa was a good woman and could walk on water' during an emotional speech, it could quite easily convince a group of people who already ascribe good regarding Mother Teresa and believe in her saintly mystical powers. However, it does not necessarily make the argument truthful.

Oratory which is based on accepted norms and presented in a logical form may convince those who accept those norms, but may not to stand up to scrutiny for lack of substance in the argument. By way of example; if someone were to say, 'Anyone who roams the streets at night is a thief. Tom roams the streets at night; therefore, Tom is a thief'. This form of oratory may convince many who already accept presumptuous norms. Hitler employed his consummate oratory skill in Weimar Germany to convince the masses with his misguided ideology, as did Mussolini in Italy. Many linguistic devices can be used in speech to achieve this. Some of them include:

2.11 POETIC LICENCE

Poetry is a type of speech or writing which incites the imag-

ination and invokes the emotions of the listener or reader. It does not necessarily furnish a proof but can convince people through its magical composition.

There are many examples in history where entire armies have been moved by poetic logic and speech. Poetic licence can make something harmful seem good, like describing wine as a fluid ruby, which may make an alcoholic indulge further and damage his liver. Likewise, it can make that which is good seem bad, like describing medicine as bitter poison, which may convince a sick person to avoid his medication.

2.12 SOPHISTRY

Sophistry consists of deceitful arguments that are intended to confuse. This category would include any specious argument, ostensibly good or right, though lacking in merit. Many religious or cultural superstitions fall into this category whereby people end up holding unconvincing beliefs. These superstitions, which have no basis in real knowledge, are then utilised by atheists to discredit belief in God.

Sophistry consists of argumentation which prima facie is rooted in fundamentals but on closer examination reveals itself to be a series of fallacies. This could be due to anything from a misused word to the misuse of implications and meanings of a word or words. Sophistry can consist of false premises, or false premises that seem truthful, or premises that amount to lies or imagination. Such fallacious arguments are based on the wrong form of syllogistic reasoning, circular reasoning or tautology.

Fallacies that are listed in books of logic also fall into this category and some of the earlier categories. There are

so many but we will look at a few. In contrast to the careful categorising of this chapter so far, another approach will be tried by means of a short story by Max Shullman:

2.13 LOVE IS A FALLACY

Cool was I and logical. Keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute and astute—I was all of these. My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, precise as a chemist's scales, as penetrating as a scalpel. And—think of it—I was only eighteen!

It is not often that one so young has such a giant intellect. Take, for example, Petey Bellows, my roommate at the university. Same age, same background, but dumb as an ox. A nice enough fellow, you understand, but nothing upstairs. Emotional type. Unstable. Impressionable. Worst of all, a faddist. Fads, I submit, are the very negation of reason. To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender oneself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this, to me, is the acme of mindlessness. Not, however, to Petey.

One afternoon I found Petey lying on his bed with an expression of such distress on his face that I immediately diagnosed appendicitis. "Don't move," I said, "Don't take a laxative. I'll get a doctor."

"Raccoon," he mumbled thickly.

"Raccoon?" I said, pausing in my flight.

"I want a raccoon coat," he wailed.

I perceived that his trouble was not physical, but mental. "Why do you want a raccoon coat?"

"I should have known it," he cried, pounding his temples.

"I should have known they'd come back when the Charleston came back. Like a fool I spent all my money on textbooks, and now I can't get a raccoon coat."

"Can you mean," I said incredulously, "that people are actually wearing raccoon coats again?"

"All the Big Men on Campus are wearing them. Where've you been?"

"In the library," I said, naming a place not frequented by Big Men on Campus.

He leaped from the bed and paced the room. "I've got to have a raccoon coat," he said passionately. "I've got to!"

"Petey, why? Look at it rationally. Raccoon coats are unsanitary. They shed. They smell bad. They weigh too much. They're unsightly. They—"

"You don't understand," he interrupted impatiently. "It's the thing to do. Don't you want to be in the swim?"

"No," I said truthfully.

"Well, I do," he declared. "I'd give anything for a raccoon coat. Anything!"

My brain, that precision instrument, slipped into high gear. "Anything?" I asked, looking at him narrowly.

"Anything," he affirmed in ringing tones.

I stroked my chin thoughtfully. It so happened that I knew where to get my hands on a raccoon coat. My father had had one in his undergraduate days; it lay now in a trunk in the attic back home. It also happened that Petey had something I wanted. He didn't have it exactly, but at least he had first rights on it. I refer to his girl, Polly Espy.

I had long coveted Polly Espy. Let me emphasise that my desire for this young woman was not emotional in nature. She was, to be sure, a girl who excited the emotions, but I was not one to let my heart rule my head. I wanted Polly for a shrewdly calculated, entirely cerebral reason.

I was a freshman in law school. In a few years I would be out in practice. I was well aware of the importance of the right kind of wife in furthering a lawyer's career. The successful lawyers I had observed were, almost without exception, married to beautiful, gracious, intelligent women. With one omission, Polly fitted these specifications perfectly.

Beautiful she was. She was not yet of pin-up proportions, but I felt that time would supply the lack. She already had the makings.

Gracious she was. By gracious I mean full of graces. She had an erectness of carriage, an ease of bearing, a poise that clearly indicated the best of breeding. At table her manners were exquisite. I had seen her at the Kozy Kampus Korner eating the specialty of the house—a sandwich that contained scraps of pot roast, gravy, chopped nuts, and a dipper of sauerkraut— without even getting her fingers moist.

Intelligent she was not. In fact, she veered in the opposite direction. But I believed that under my guidance she would smarten up. At any rate, it was worth a try. It is, after all, easier to make a beautiful dumb girl smart than to make an ugly smart girl beautiful.

"Petey," I said, "are you in love with Polly Espy?"

"I think she's a keen kid," he replied, "but I don't know if you'd call it love. Why?"

"Do you," I asked, "have any kind of formal arrangement with her? I mean are you going steady or anything like that?"

"No. We see each other quite a bit, but we both have other dates. Why?"

"Is there," I asked, "any other man for whom she has a particular fondness?"

"Not that I know of. Why?"

I nodded with satisfaction. "In other words, if you were out of the picture, the field would be open. Is that right?"

"I guess so. What are you getting at?"

"Nothing, nothing," I said innocently, and took my suitcase out the closet.

"Where are you going?" asked Petey.

"Home for the weekend." I threw a few things into the bag.

"Listen," he said, clutching my arm eagerly, "while you're home, you couldn't get some money from your old man, could you, and lend it to me so I can buy a raccoon coat?"

"I may do better than that," I said with a mysterious wink and closed my bag and left.

"Look," I said to Petey when I got back Monday morning. I threw open the suitcase and revealed the huge, hairy, gamy object that my father had worn in his Stutz Bearcat in 1925.

"Holy Toledo!" said Petey reverently. He plunged his hands into the raccoon coat and then his face. "Holy Toledo!" he repeated fifteen or twenty times.

"Would you like it?" I asked.

"Oh yes!" he cried, clutching the greasy pelt to him. Then a canny look came into his eyes. "What do you want for it?"

"Your girl." I said, mincing no words.

"Polly?" he said in a horrified whisper. "You want Polly?"

"That's right."

He flung the coat from him. "Never," he said stoutly.

I shrugged. "Okay. If you don't want to be in the swim, I guess it's your business."

I sat down in a chair and pretended to read a book, but out of the corner of my eye I kept watching Petey. He was a torn man. First he looked at the coat with the expression of a waif at a bakery window. Then he turned away and set his jaw resolutely. Then he looked back at the coat, with even more longing in his face. Then he turned away, but with not so much resolution this time. Back and forth his head swivelled, desire waxing, resolution waning. Finally, he didn't turn away at all; he just stood and stared with mad lust at the coat.

"It isn't as though I was in love with Polly," he said thickly. "Or going steady or anything like that."

"That's right," I murmured.

"What's Polly to me, or me to Polly?"

"Not a thing," said I.

"It's just been a casual kick—just a few laughs, that's all."

"Try on the coat," said I.

He complied. The coat bunched high over his ears and dropped all the way down to his shoe tops. He looked like a mound of dead raccoons. "Fits fine," he said happily.

I rose from my chair. "Is it a deal?" I asked, extending my hand.

He swallowed. "It's a deal," he said and shook my hand.

I had my first date with Polly the following evening. This

was in the nature of a survey; I wanted to find out just how much work I had to do to get her mind up to the standard I required. I took her first to dinner. "Gee, that was a delish dinner," she said as we left the restaurant. Then I took her to a movie. "Gee, that was a marvy movie," she said as we left the theatre. And then I took her home. "Gee, I had a sensaysh time," she said as she bade me good night.

I went back to my room with a heavy heart. I had gravely underestimated the size of my task. This girl's lack of information was terrifying. Nor would it be enough merely to supply her with information. First she had to be taught to *think*. This loomed as a project of no small dimensions, and at first I was tempted to give her back to Petey. But then I got to thinking about her abundant physical charms and about the way she entered a room and the way she handled a knife and fork, and I decided to make an effort.

I went about it, as in all things, systematically. I gave her a course in logic. It happened that I, as a law student, was taking a course in logic myself, so I had all the facts at my fingertips. "Poll'," I said to her when I picked her up on our next date, "tonight we are going over to the Knoll and talk."

"Oo, terrif," she replied. One thing I will say for this girl: you would go far to find another so agreeable.

We went to the Knoll, the campus trysting place, and we sat down under an old oak, and she looked at me expectantly. "What are we going to talk about?" she asked.

"Logic."

She thought this over for a minute and decided she liked it. "Magnif," she said.

"Logic," I said, clearing my throat, "is the science of thinking. Before we can think correctly, we must first learn

to recognise the common fallacies of logic. These we will take up tonight."

"Wow-dow!" she cried, clapping her hands delightedly.

I winced, but went bravely on. "First let us examine the fallacy called Dicto Simpliciter."

"By all means," she urged, batting her lashes eagerly.

"Dicto Simpliciter means an argument based on an unqualified generalisation. For example: Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise."

"I agree," said Polly earnestly. "I mean exercise is wonderful. I mean it builds the body and everything."

"Polly," I said gently, "the argument is a fallacy. Exercise is good is an unqualified generalisation. For instance, if you have heart disease, exercise is bad, not good. Many people are ordered by their doctors *not* to exercise. You must *qualify* the generalisation. You must say exercise is *usually* good, or exercise is good *for most people*. Otherwise you have committed a Dicto Simpliciter. Do you see?"

"No," she confessed. "But this is marvy. Do more! Do more!"

"It will be better if you stop tugging at my sleeve," I told her, and when she desisted, I continued. "Next we take up a fallacy called Hasty Generalisation. Listen carefully: You can't speak French. Petey Bellows can't speak French. I must therefore conclude that nobody at the University of Minnesota can speak French."

"Really?" said Polly, amazed. "*Nobody?*"

I hid my exasperation. "Polly, it's a fallacy. The generalisation is reached too hastily. There are too few instances to support such a conclusion."

"Know any more fallacies?" she asked breathlessly. "This is more fun than dancing even."

I fought off a wave of despair. I was getting nowhere with this girl, absolutely nowhere. Still, I am nothing if not persistent. I continued. "Next comes Post Hoc. Listen to this: Let's not take Bill on our picnic. Every time we take him out with us, it rains."

"I know somebody just like that," she exclaimed. "A girl back home—Eula Becker, her name is. It never fails. Every single time we take her on a picnic—"

"Polly," I said sharply, "it's a fallacy. Eula Becker doesn't cause the rain. She has no connection with the rain. You are guilty of Post Hoc if you blame Eula Becker."

"I'll never do it again," she promised contritely. "Are you mad at me?"

I sighed. "No, Polly, I'm not mad."

"Then tell me some more fallacies."

"All right. Let's try Contradictory Premises."

"Yes, let's," she chirped, blinking her eyes happily.

I frowned, but plunged ahead. "Here's an example of Contradictory Premises: If God can do anything, can He make a stone so heavy that He won't be able to lift it?"

"Of course," she replied promptly.

"But if He can do anything, He can lift the stone," I pointed out.

"Yeah," she said thoughtfully. "Well, then I guess He can't make the stone."

"But He can do anything," I reminded her.

She scratched her pretty, empty head. "I'm all confused," she admitted.

"Of course you are. Because when the premises of an argument contradict each other, there can be no argument. If there is an irresistible force, there can be no immovable object. If there is an immovable object, there can be no irresistible force. Get it?"

"Tell me more of this keen stuff," she said eagerly.

I consulted my watch. "I think we'd better call it a night. I'll take you home now, and you go over all the things you've learned. We'll have another session tomorrow night."

I deposited her at the girls' dormitory, where she assured me that she had had a perfectly terrif evening, and I went glumly home to my room. Petey lay snoring in his bed, the raccoon coat huddled like a great hairy beast at his feet. For a moment I considered waking him and telling him that he could have his girl back. It seemed clear that my project was doomed to failure. The girl simply had a logic-proof head.

But then I reconsidered. I had wasted one evening; I might as well waste another. Who knew? Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind a few members still smouldered. Maybe somehow I could fan them into flame. Admittedly it was not a prospect fraught with hope, but I decided to give it one more try.

Seated under the oak the next evening I said, "Our first fallacy tonight is called Ad Misericordiam."

She quivered with delight.

"Listen closely," I said. "A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are, he replies that he has a wife and six children at home, the wife is a helpless

cripple, the children have nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no shoes on their feet, there are no beds in the house, no coal in the cellar, and winter is coming."

A tear rolled down each of Polly's pink cheeks. "Oh, this is awful, awful," she sobbed.

"Yes, it's awful," I agreed, "but it's no argument. The man never answered the boss's question about his qualifications. Instead he appealed to the boss's sympathy. He committed the fallacy of Ad Misericordiam. Do you understand?"

"Have you got a handkerchief?" she blubbered.

I handed her a handkerchief and tried to keep from screaming while she wiped her eyes.

"Next," I said in a carefully controlled tone, "we will discuss False Analogy. Here is an example: Students should be allowed to look at their textbooks during examinations. After all, surgeons have X-rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide them during a trial, carpenters have blueprints to guide them when they are building a house. Why, then, shouldn't students be allowed to look at their textbooks during an examination?"

"There now," she said enthusiastically, "is the most marvy idea I've heard in years."

"Polly," I said testily, "the argument is all wrong. Doctors, lawyers, and carpenters aren't taking a test to see how much they have learned, but students are. The situations are altogether different, and you can't make an analogy between them."

"I still think it's a good idea," said Polly.

"Nuts," I muttered. Doggedly I pressed on. "Next we'll try Hypothesis Contrary to Fact."

"Sounds yummy," was Polly's reaction.

"Listen: If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium."

"True, true," said Polly, nodding her head "Did you see the movie? Oh, it just knocked me out. That Walter Pidgeon is so dreamy. I mean he fractures me."

"If you can forget Mr. Pidgeon for a moment," I said coldly, "I would like to point out that statement is a fallacy. Maybe Madame Curie would have discovered radium at some later date. Maybe somebody else would have discovered it. Maybe any number of things would have happened. You can't start with a hypothesis that is not true and then draw any supportable conclusions from it."

"They ought to put Walter Pidgeon in more pictures," said Polly, "I hardly ever see him any more."

One more chance, I decided. But just one more. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can bear. "The next fallacy is called Poisoning the Well."

"How cute!" she gurgled.

"Two men are having a debate. The first one gets up and says, 'My opponent is a notorious liar. You can't believe a word that he is going to say.' ... Now, Polly, think. Think hard. What's wrong?"

I watched her closely as she knit her creamy brow in concentration. Suddenly a glimmer of intelligence—the first I had seen—came into her eyes. "It's not fair," she said with indignation. "It's not a bit fair. What chance has the second man got if the first man calls him a liar before he even begins talking?"

"Right!" I cried exultantly. "One hundred percent right. It's not fair. The first man has *poisoned the well* before anybody could drink from it. He has hamstrung his opponent before he could even start ... Polly, I'm proud of you."

"Pshaws," she murmured, blushing with pleasure.

"You see, my dear, these things aren't so hard. All you have to do is concentrate. Think—examine—evaluate. Come now, let's review everything we have learned."

"Fire away," she said with an airy wave of her hand.

Heartened by the knowledge that Polly was not altogether a cretin, I began a long, patient review of all I had told her. Over and over and over again I cited instances, pointed out flaws, kept hammering away without let up. It was like digging a tunnel. At first, everything was work, sweat, and darkness. I had no idea when I would reach the light, or even if I would. But I persisted. I pounded and clawed and scraped, and finally I was rewarded. I saw a chink of light. And then the chink got bigger and the sun came pouring in and all was bright.

Five gruelling nights this took, but it was worth it. I had made a logician out of Polly; I had taught her to think. My job was done. She was worthy of me, at last. She was a fit wife for me, a proper hostess for my many mansions, a suitable mother for my well-heeled children.

It must not be thought that I was without love for this girl. Quite the contrary. Just as Pygmalion loved the perfect woman he had fashioned, so I loved mine. I decided to acquaint her with my feelings at our very next meeting. The time had come to change our relationship from academic to romantic.

"Polly," I said when next we sat beneath our oak, "tonight we will not discuss fallacies."

"Aw, gee," she said, disappointed.

"My dear," I said, favouring her with a smile, "we have now spent five evenings together. We have gotten along splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched."

"Hasty Generalisation," said Polly brightly.

"I beg your pardon," said I.

"Hasty Generalisation," she repeated. "How can you say that we are well matched on the basis of only five dates?"

I chuckled with amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons well. "My dear," I said, patting her hand in a tolerant manner, "five dates is plenty. After all, you don't have to eat a whole cake to know that it's good."

"False Analogy," said Polly promptly. "I'm not a cake. I'm a girl."

I chuckled with somewhat less amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons perhaps too well. I decided to change tactics. Obviously the best approach was a simple, strong, direct declaration of love. I paused for a moment while my massive brain chose the proper word. Then I began:

"Polly, I love you. You are the whole world to me, the moon and the stars and the constellations of outer space. Please, my darling, say that you will go steady with me, for if you will not, life will be meaningless. I will languish. I will refuse my meals. I will wander the face of the earth, a shambling, hollow-eyed hulk."

There, I thought, folding my arms, that ought to do it.

"Ad Misericordiam," said Polly.

I ground my teeth. I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein, and my monster had me by the throat. Frantically I

fought back the tide of panic surging through me; at all costs I had to keep cool.

"Well, Polly," I said, forcing a smile, "you certainly have learned your fallacies."

"You're darn right," she said with a vigorous nod.

"And who taught them to you, Polly?"

"You did."

"That's right. So you do owe me something, don't you, my dear? If I hadn't come along you never would have learned about fallacies."

"Hypothesis Contrary to Fact," she said instantly.

I dashed perspiration from my brow. "Polly," I croaked, "you mustn't take all these things so literally. I mean this is just classroom stuff. You know that the things you learn in school don't have anything to do with life."

"Dicto Simpliciter," she said, wagging her finger at me playfully.

That did it. I leaped to my feet, bellowing like a bull. "Will you or will you not go steady with me?"

"I will not," she replied.

"Why not?" I demanded.

"Because this afternoon I promised Petey Bellows that I would go steady with him."

I reeled back, overcome with the infamy of it. After he promised, after he made a deal, after he shook my hand! "The rat!" I shrieked, kicking up great chunks of turf. "You can't go with him, Polly. He's a liar. He's a cheat. He's a rat."

"Poisoning the Well," said Polly, "and stop shouting. I think shouting must be a fallacy too."

With an immense effort of will, I modulated my voice. "All right," I said. "You're a logician. Let's look at this thing logically. How could you choose Petey Bellows over me? Look at me—a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future. Look at Petey—a knothead, a jitterbug, a guy who'll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one logical reason why you should go steady with Petey Bellows?"

"I certainly can," declared Polly. "He's got a raccoon coat."

2.14 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON SENSE & THE METHOD OF SIGNIFICATION

There are many ways we attain certainty through common, or what we deem as common, sense. We can be certain of the many times that we attained certainty using the six ways of certainty outlined above. Nevertheless, there are other ways we can attain certainty and be utterly convinced even if others doubted it. If one contemplates the many ways that certainty has been arrived at, the list of those multiple means of attaining certainty will give others some cause to doubt.

Imagine you are flying in an aeroplane over an ocean, when suddenly an island becomes observable through the aeroplane window. Your aeroplane draws closer to the island and then is flying over the island. You then start observing the island landscape from above. While flying over some hills you observe writing set out in piles of stone spelling out 'SOS'. What will that signify for you and what will you conclude, and

most importantly what will you do about it? Or let's suppose you see carvings of statues made from stone. What will that signify for you? Imagine then for a moment how you will convey to those with you what you think the 'SOS' means, or what the carvings entail. Then imagine that one of your listeners disagrees with your conclusion.

Again, let's suppose you are driving on the motorway and you turn off and enter a village. When driving through the village you notice that the majority of the homes and buildings have the symbol of a cross on them. You turn around to the people with you in the car and tell them you think this is a Christian village. One of your companions disagrees and elaborates an entire argument as to why.

Another example. You are standing on the street and see smoke pouring out of the window of someone's home causing you to panic and shout, 'Fire!', pulling out your mobile phone and calling the fire brigade. Someone on the road tells you that you are overreacting and the smoke could be something else and begins an elaborate argument to convince you of this.

There are many more familiar examples of signification that we could present from our own lives. The certainty that you could identify in the above three cases is that of the likeness of the theist, while the objector in all three similitudes is the likeness of the sceptics and atheists.

2.15 ANGLO-EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY & ITS EPISTEMOLOGY

Western philosophy is a broad subject, yet for our purposes we will only look at a few key concepts in order to appreciate the basis and core discussions relating to atheism. It is impor-

tant to realise how the Anglo-European views Islamic epistemology and Qur'ānic world view in general and his classification of *Kalām* principles. When Muslim theologians and philosophers classified their concepts, ideas and philosophies, they used Arabic terms which likely carry a different meaning in Anglo-Euro philosophy. Therefore, it is important to categorise and understand certain things before proceeding further.

Empiricism

In epistemology, scepticism is the result of empiricism. Empiricism is rooted in the principle that all we know about the world is what the world cares to tell us. Our world view is constructed from our five senses and the material realm surrounding us. Empiricism tells us that we must observe the world around us dispassionately without resorting to arbitrary imaginings that can lead to distortion. Our five senses give us what nineteenth century philosophers referred to as 'sense data' which is then imprinted on the mind. The mind then manipulates this data by combining or abstracting information, and then observes further manifestations through more experience.

This way of thinking leads to many difficulties and internal contradictions, especially in regard to the fact that we truly cannot know anything regarding the world, with the function of the mind, as John Locke proposed, limited to manipulating and building upon experience. The extreme empiricism of Locke and his successors Berkeley and Hume was reined in by Immanuel Kant and later by Wittgenstein in the twentieth century.

Every philosopher is an empiricist to some degree but some empiricists may just confine themselves to opposing extreme

rationalism. They may say that the mind works the way outlined above but deny that there are many a priori truths, in other words, truths that can be known without any recourse to sense experience. Such an absurd way of thinking raises problems of dealing with mathematical truths and logic. The only way of really resolving this is by acknowledging rational judgements, both the a priori and the a posteriori.

Nominalism

This is the rejection of what are known as 'universals'. When we say 'mankind', or 'chair' for example, as universal concepts, nominalists will argue for a particular resemblance of these things while denying the conceived referents of these terms, even though this amounts to a tacit reliance on universals since all things resemble each other in many different ways and resemblance always implies similarity in some general respect.

Because nominalism denies universals, it will ultimately deny syllogisms. Although all human thought and speech uses the universal, with the exception of proper names, with nominalism, knowledge of objective reality becomes concrete individual entities and this amounts to nominalists denying what an apple is, for instance, so every individual apple is an apple but there is no such thing as 'apple-ness' according to the nominalist. Human abstraction and reasoning are thus assaulted through human error by the abstraction of universal essences in the past, despite the fact that all human knowledge is prone to error as well as success. In fact the abstraction of universal essences has generally left human progression in science with a far better understanding of the essence of things. Induction is the process of moving from a particular (horse) to a universal (horses) in order to under-

stand things, which is the first act of the mind. Induction also uses this abstraction in moving from singular propositions to a universal proposition through reasoning, which is the third act of the mind.

Materialism

Simply stated, this is the view that everything is made of matter. From the time of the Greek philosopher Democritus in the 5TH Century BC up until the last century, the model of materialism remained essentially the same with some minor modifications and sophistications.

The introduction of General Relativity greatly confounded materialist philosophy with mass replacing the crude notion of matter and with new concepts and ideas that totally disproved the old materialism; concepts like particles popping into existence and then disappearing again, the interchangeability of matter and energy, or the no mass of energy fields and little mass of photons and neutrons.

This has led to the substitution of 'matter' to 'anything that can be studied by natural science', more akin to naturalism than traditional materialism even though naturalism is wider in scope since it studies properties as well as substance and is more direct in its studies. However, materialism per se was unaffected to a degree by this new science since philosophers attempt to start with common sense and the material realm, unlike empiricism which starts with a hands-on approach and is less interested in common sense.

Materialists sometimes assert that mind, spirit and consciousness do not form a separate existence to the material body, some even denying that the mind exists at all (Protagoras comes to mind, or Descartes), or that minds do exist but

as some form of matter. Some materialists (like Popper and Frege) attempt a distinction of three kinds of real things: the first contains the material, the second psychological things like feelings and the third abstract things.

That is an overall summary of materialism as it relates to metaphysics, however, in terms of values the materialist pursues ends connected with bodily pleasures and the accumulation of material goods.

Reductionism is one of the pitfalls of materialism and it is usually done by reducing form to matter. This is one of the fallacies in our age where materialism is rampant. An example: "Words are nothing but wind, and learning is nothing but words, therefore learning is nothing but wind." (Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*)

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is morality that treats human desire, pleasure and satisfaction as the sole element of human good. Morality is thus dependent on consequences or outcomes pertaining to human well-being. Present day utilitarianism has many components, important variations and internal disagreements. One example is what is known as 'ethical hedonism', the result of Bentham assuming that all humans are motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Another is 'outcome utilitarianism' which judges goodness by the overall well-being of humans or sentient beings. Utilitarianism consequently has many nuanced debates about the precise meaning of human pursuit of pleasure and well-being, and the avoidance of pain and suffering.

Logical Positivism

This is also known as linguistic empiricism. A twentieth century movement, which in a narrower sense is nominally the Vienna Circle named after a group of thinkers based in Vienna in the 1920s. In a broader sense, however, it includes thinkers who were not from Vienna, like A. J. Ayer and others.

The principle of verifiability is central to this group. This means that propositions are meaningful if they are verifiable by sense perception, directly or indirectly, or by the meaning of words and grammatical construct. If the propositions are verified by sense perception, they are classified as synthetically true or false. If they are verified by meaning, then they are classified as analytically true or false. Anything not verified by this method is classed as meaningless, with religious, metaphysical, ethical and aesthetic things therefore seen as meaningless by many ascribing to this philosophy. This made the Logical Positivists fanatical about science, but only directly verifiable foundational claims and not theoretic science and abstract laws.

This version of logical positivism later came under attack and by the late 1960s had lost its momentum. A softer, more modified version, called 'Analytic Philosophy' evolved which contended that the meaning of any proposition is its mode of verification. This mode of verification implies that propositions are either empirically verifiable or tautological, or a combination of both. The empirically verifiable would in the broader sense includes our inner feelings. The tautological would be like mathematical propositions which are tautological or reducible to tautology. A combination of the two could be likened to the physical sciences. However, since this mode of verification is unverifiable itself—neither empirically nor tautologically—it is by its own method meaningless.

These ways of thinking were clearly influenced by David Hume who classified all known things as relations of ideas, only known by the mind, like algebra, arithmetic, geometry and every affirmation which is intuitively or demonstrably known, or a second division being that of matters of fact, known by sense observation and memory of sense observation. What Hume termed as relations of ideas Immanuel Kant would call analytic propositions, and what Hume named matters of fact, Kant named synthetic propositions. In analytic propositions, the predicate is already contained within the subject while in synthetic propositions it is not. Kant would go one step further as he divided both synthetic and the analytical propositions into a priori and a posteriori, making four propositions in total.

This summary is sufficient for us to understand the underlying roots of scepticism or mitigated scepticism in Anglo-European philosophy and thought. What was presented at the beginning of this chapter was a summary of the common epistemology in the *Kalām* tradition, and toward the end, a summary of some of the key concepts that underlie the foundations of modern atheism.

"I believe myself that his whole life was a search for God ... Indeed, he had first taken up philosophy in hope of finding proof of the evidence of the existence of God ... Somewhere at the back of my father's mind, at the bottom of his heart, in the depths of his soul [which he did not believe he had] there was an empty space that had once been filled by God, and he never found anything else to put in it"

—*My Father: Bertrand Russell*, by Katharine Tait

CHAPTER THREE

God's Existence

3.1 CAUSE & EFFECT

DEDUCTION CAN BE of four types. Firstly, where a deduction is made from cause to effect. The second type of deduction is the reverse, i.e. from effect to cause. The third type stems from one effect and one cause to deduce another effect. The fourth consists of making a deduction of one inseparable from another.

An example of the first—from cause to effect—would be like deducing the fact that when you see fire touch cloth, the cloth will burn. The effect is deduced from the cause.

An example of the second would be like seeing some burnt cloth and knowing that the burn was caused by fire. The cause will be deduced from visible effects.

An example of the third would be to see water in a cauldron that is boiling over a flame and deducing that the water is hot. In this example, the boiling water is one effect while the fire is the cause allowing the deduction of a second effect, namely; that the water is hot.

An example of the fourth type would be like knowing that you could deduce the knowledge that someone else has.

The question to be asked is which type of deduction would rational theologians utilise in order to know from the intellect whatever they can about God. Some have termed this exercise as natural theology. The answer is that they would employ only the second and fourth type of deduction mentioned above. This is very important for a person to know since he could easily fall into a fallacy in this regard.

3.2 THE SCEPTICAL FETTERS OF DAVID HUME

Traditionally, Muslim rational theologians of the Sunnī *Kalām* method locked horns with extreme sceptics, for whom they gave the Arabic name *Sūfasṭā'iyya* (sophistry comes from the same root) and from whom blossomed three opposing schools, the *ʿInādiyya*, the *ʿIndiyya*, and the *Lā-adriyya*. Each one of these groups had its own distinctive type of scepticism.

The *ʿInādiyya* claimed that reality was imagination and thoughts.

The *ʿIndiyya* claimed that reality accorded with whatever the beholder made of it; if he made a particle out of it then it would be a particle, or if he saw it as accidental then it would be accidental. Similarly if he made it eternal then it was eternal, and if he saw it as contingent then it was contingent.

The *Lā-adriyya*, on the other hand, claimed that reality could neither be affirmed nor denied and that they, the observers, were doubtful, and doubtful about the fact that they were doubtful, and doubtful of that fact also, *ad infinitum*.

It is not clear whether the *Lā-adriyya* were in fact from the sceptical tradition of Pyrrhonism or not, whose founder, Pyrrho of Elis (D. 270 BC), refused to commit himself to any

positive belief. He attempted to balance any thesis to its counter thesis without committing himself to any. The idea of Pyrrhonism was passed down into the works of Sextus Empiricus in his 'Outlines of Pyrrhonism', a work said to have been 're-discovered' by the Anglo-Europeans in the mid sixteenth century. It seems that the sceptical concerns of Montague and Descartes are a direct response to this work, with Descartes identifying the defeat of scepticism as the first task of philosophy. This period marked the time, at least in Europe, of the questioning of religious truths and the establishment of the foundations of science.

Scepticism not only undermines metaphysical positions but also any scientific claims to uncover the underlying reality of matter. This is why John Locke, later to influence Hume, claimed that the study of nature yields opinion and not knowledge. To remove themselves from this conundrum, some atheists opt for a localised scepticism rather than a universal type scepticism—retaining scepticism for metaphysical and religious issues while plumping for certainty in regards to science. This position can be reversed by certain theists who advocate certainty regarding religious beliefs and doubt in regard to that which is scientifically knowable.

The inherent problem with scepticism is that it forces people to treat everything as a hypothesis. Facts like the existence of the world around us should not necessarily require any particular argument, yet even arguments put forward to support their scepticism are more doubtful than their own certainty. Kant, on the other hand, took the position that we can attain knowledge empirically through our mind's structuring of this knowledge characterising the world around us. Sceptics might question things as they are in themselves (the noumenal world) but not how we formulate the world by our cognitive constitution. Those things remain untouched.

Dogmatic assertions are always the result of data which is elementary and a result of things like sense perception, which sceptics will dispute, neither accepting a proposed notion nor its opposite. It is said that Pyrrho because of his scepticism was a very calm person and once, during a storm in which everyone on the ship panicked, Pyrrho did not. This, it is said, was because he never chose any position with certainty. It does not entail therefore that sceptics do not engage with practical things in life, it just means they do not have certainty regarding them.

There were also sceptics associated with Plato's Academia, like Arcesilaus and later Carneades. The latter formed an epistemological approach to scepticism known as probabilism, a mitigated form of scepticism like that of the more contemporary Scot, David Hume. Pyrrhonism was also revived in the 1ST Century CE at Plato's Academy by Aenesidemus. These academic sceptics had sharp criticisms for dogmatic philosophies such as Stoicism and Epicureanism and yet were distinct from the extreme forms of scepticism like Pyrrhonism and Solipsism. Solipsism entailed the view that only oneself existed but, like many other philosophies and beliefs, it had a variety of forms. Academic Scepticism was passed down from Carneades, via Chitomachus and Philo of Larissa, to Cicero (43 BC) who wrote 'Academica', a work well known to David Hume.

Before moving onto Hume's statements regarding cause and effect, we need to quickly peruse the counter responses to ancient scepticism. It came to be asserted that the external realm that we feel, hear and see is a reality that is established and not a mirage in our minds or the invention of our minds; a realism that has worked for philosophy and science. Scepticism concurs with Nominalism in refusing to acknowledge universals, as such a reality would undermine the realities of

distinct entities and also lead to a type of scepticism regarding the defining of realities of various things; therefore, it is not surprising that many sceptics are nominalists. According to the *Kalām* scholars, the very ability to abstract and understand universals is a specific human feature and is what differentiates humans from other animals. This was how they interpreted the earlier Hellenistic definition of a human as being a talking animal, since while human mutes are unable to talk, they can nevertheless abstract the universal.

Entities or things are thus anything that has an actual existence and not something that has no real existence. This is true even though we may use terms such as thing or reality for the non-existent, as it would only be done metaphorically. Words employed for existent realities like 'established', or 'real', or 'existent', or 'the universe' are all synonyms for the same thing, albeit some philosophers may deny that synonyms are even possible, the meaning entailed by such words being self-evident. The self-evident nature of the universe means that this conclusion does not require any theoretical reasoning while other rational theologians think otherwise. The self-evident nature of the existent realities is understood once we understand our own existence. By saying 'we exist', this statement affirms a self-evident fact which is understood without recourse to any theoretical demonstration, with the whole of this statement comprising a part of 'exist'. So, if the entire proposition of 'I exist' is self-evident, then that would mean the part 'exist' is also self-evident, important when we aim to establish by such a claim that the existence of realities is self-evident.

Another argument that reality exists as a self-evident understanding is the common sense understanding that existents and non-existents are not found at the same time in one entity. This intuitive assertion is understood without reflection

and as such would mean that its parts—which are existent and non-existent—are also understood without theoretical investigation.

Additionally, the very concept of the existent is simple in that it is not composed of parts. If it were a composition needing a definition, then the parts that needed defining would be either existent or not. If the composition was an existent that entailed a definition of the thing by itself, this would be a rational absurdity. If, on the other hand, it was composed of nothing then this would entail the defined (existence) being composed by its contrary (non-existence), which is impossible. If the claim is made that the assertion as to the reality of things as established is merely a tautology, a play on words, since 'realities' and 'established' mean the same thing, the response would simply be that both words, 'realities' and 'established', are being used under varying considerations. For instance, if we understand the word 'human' to mean simply a body and we make the judgement that a human is an animal, that is acceptable, but if we understand the same word 'human' to mean a talking rational animal and then we define a human as an animal, that would be a tautology. In both cases, the same thing is being defined yet due to the varying considerations the former definition is acceptable while the latter is not. The same case can be made with the statement that the external realm—what we feel, hear and see—is a reality that is established, is not a tautology due to the different considerations given to the words 'reality' and 'established'.

The very fact the we conceptualise things regarding realities which exist and give judgments regarding them further reinforces the fact here that existence is self-evident. We are, for example, certain with regard to realities perceived through our senses, like the sun rising and the earth around us—these

amount to necessities. We also know of necessities through various proofs (as covered in the previous chapter), like our knowledge of the existence of Venice even if we have not seen or visited Venice. In the case of knowing Venice, our certainty has come through what is known as mass-transmission.

Even the statement that 'nothing from the realities is established' would be tantamount to affirming a reality, which is the reality that no reality actually exists, which in itself would be an affirmative assertive reality. The sceptic could respond to this by saying that the realities they are negating are in fact external material realities and not true knowledge, which is immaterial and not extra-mental. The response would be that the ancient sceptic denied any reality at all, whether material or mental, and argued that knowledge is physical since thoughts occur in the brain and chemical reactions are a part of the physical realm, even though some rational theologians would say that knowledge does not externally exist.

The perception of the world around us is an external source of knowledge derived from our perception and whatever is related to us from a truthful report—such as the mass transmission that Venice exists. If perceived through non-rational senses—and the sensory perception is healthy and not distorted—it would be through our sight, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling, and if the instrument of perception is rational then it will be through the mind. As covered in the previous chapter, there can be a combination of ways to ascertain certainty.

Hume's thoughts on knowledge state that what we do not attain through sensory perception must be from causality; cause to effect and effect to cause. By such reasoning, the premise and conclusion are dependent on the connection between cause and effect. He reasons that as we see a constant

conjunction between two events, we assume they are related. This combination of sensory experience and custom is what lends to our causal reasoning. In the previous chapter we looked at this, showing that causal reasoning came to be dubbed the empirical judgement.

Hume, with his materialist and reductionist epistemology reducing all human experience to the senses and all reasoning to scientific and mathematical calculating, concludes that science will never discover ultimate causes or a first cause, thereby ignoring immaterial human experience like love, intuition and feeling.

Causal reasoning can either be from cause to effect or effect to cause, yet Hume only gives examples of cause to effect and not effect to cause. This would, therefore, entail that Hume may be correct when reasoning from cause to effect, that we may sometimes not predict what will occur, but when we see the effect of something, we can say with certainty what caused it. The question was raised earlier, in regard to the deductions from cause and effect as to which type of deduction rational theologians would use in order to know about God in whatever way they could from the intellect. Some have termed this natural theology. The answer suggested was that they would employ only the second and fourth type of deduction.

To refresh our memories, the second type of deduction would be from effect to cause. An example of the second would be like seeing burnt cloth and knowing that the burn was caused by fire. Such is the case whenever the effects of something are visible and the effect is deduced.

It cannot be said with certainty that grey clouds will bring rain; namely, a deduction from cause to effect, but it can be stated with certainty that where there are grey clouds, it is because of rain. This is a deduction from effect to cause which

does impart certainty. As we know with certainty that tracks or footsteps have been left by the paws of an animal or the feet of a human being—reasoning from effect to cause with certainty—it cannot be similarly stated with certainty that all animals and humans will leave tracks, which is reasoning from cause to effect, like a Euclid-type reasoning which forwards that the sum of the interior angles of a triangle being 180° is not the definition that the rational theologians would give to a triangle, unlike Spinoza and others.

Additional problems with Hume's scepticism stem from his Nominalism (from *nomina* which means names, as universal things are given names. *Nām* in Farsi and Urdu also means name) and the absence of abstraction which leads to more uncertainty. We experience man and his mortality, and the abstracting (literally 'taking away') of the essentials and accidentals, like the essential nature of the organic body dying and the accidental nature of the causes of death. Thus, we know with certainty that man is mortal. Yet, for Hume the observance of cause and effect is merely a custom and not something to abstract from, nor learn from or understand, but rather something we share with animals. Thus, we see events but not the causal reality between those events. The fact that we as humans can categorise species and tell the difference between healthy foods and poisonous foods is sufficient proof of the incoherent nature of Hume's Nominalism and other reasoning, whether in his 'Enquiry' or 'Dialogues'.

One final point to add before moving on—even though we will return to some of Hume's interesting objections later—is Hume's linkage of cause and effect as being something purely psychological. Such a reductionism of human understanding would equate physical causes and psychological causes that we know of and therefore undermine the science. It is like saying: 'He was killed by a car that ran over him', and 'His

wife was depressed because her husband died.' The former is a physical cause and the latter is a psychological cause, that without cognizance of which, we as humans would not progress.

3.3 RUSSELL'S TEAPOT

It is important to mention before proceeding that Bertrand Russell is famous for his teapot analogy (an atheist favourite, which has been extended to a spaghetti monster god by others). Of course, derision and mockery are favoured by New Atheists and should not be given too much attention. What Russell actually said was:

> "Many orthodox people speak as though it were the business of sceptics to disprove received dogmas rather than of dogmatists to prove them. This is, of course, a mistake. If I were to suggest that between the Earth and Mars there is a china teapot revolving about the sun in an elliptical orbit, nobody would be able to disprove my assertion provided I were careful to add that the teapot is too small to be revealed even by our most powerful telescopes. But if I were to go on to say that, since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is intolerable presumption on the part of human reason to doubt it, I should rightly be thought to be talking nonsense. If, however, the existence of such a teapot were affirmed in ancient books, taught as the sacred truth every Sunday, and instilled into the minds of children at school, hesitation to believe in its existence would become a mark of eccentricity and entitle the doubter to the attentions of the psychiatrist in an enlightened age or of the Inquisitor in an earlier time."[32]

In 1958, Russell elaborated on the analogy:

> "I ought to call myself an agnostic; but, for all practical purposes, I am an atheist. I do not think the existence of the Christian God any more probable than the existence of the Gods of Olympus or Valhalla. To take another illustration: nobody can prove that there is not between the Earth and Mars a china teapot revolving in an elliptical orbit, but nobody thinks this sufficiently likely to be taken into account in practice. I think the Christian God just as unlikely."[33]

The fallacy in this teapot analogy is the equating of God with the Olympus and Valhalla gods, and the equating of a teapot in an elliptical orbit between Earth and Mars with the existence of God. Russell coming from a Christian background qualifies the word 'God' with 'the Christian', forestalling some acute differences between Islam and Christianity, as the latter holds the divinity of a man to be a rational possibility while in Islam it is an impossibility. Also, the difference between a cause of the universe that is called God is totally different to a random claim of an orbiting teapot. The former has a rational basis and is not just a haphazard claim.

This rational deduction of a First Cause that is self-sufficient and eternal is an argument deduced from effect to cause and a host of other proofs that cumulatively make the argument for God, which is incomparable with the teapot or any similar claims. The assimilation of God with other gods is also a false analogy since God bears no similarity to creation in any way and having no anthropomorphic nature that would entail contingency, and anything contingent cannot be God.

So what are the essential attributes we must know regarding God so as not to fall into fallacious arguments of spaghetti monsters, teapots or an old man with a beard? Like atheists, Muslims reject all gods as false except God, as God is

known through reason and many of His attributes are known through reason too. Attributes known through scripture do not contradict reason. Words that outwardly may give God any resemblance to creation are metaphors, homonyms, or other rhetoric devices utilised in eloquent language.

In summary, Muslims would reject all the same gods that atheists reject except the One God that must be understood before delving into His divine existence and nature. The rule in Islamic legal theory is: 'A judgement on a given thing is the subsidiary of its conception', and thus it is imperative that we have the correct concept of what is actually being debated with Muslims. If an atheist deems the debate with all theists as being on the same in terms in how they conceptualise God and His attributes, he will fall into gross error when giving judgements regarding the position of those theists.

One further thing to point out regarding Russell's contention that dogmatists expect sceptics to disprove their dogma is when he said, "Many orthodox people speak as though it were the business of sceptics to disprove received dogmas rather than of dogmatists to prove them. This is, of course, a mistake." Russell is correct here. It is not the task of sceptics to disprove any dogma, but it is the task of theists to furnish valid proofs for the existence of God. So, what is it that we are setting out to prove aside from the existence of God? Here is a summary of what Muslims actually believe regarding the divine creator:

> A: The twenty attributes *necessarily true* of God, but more specifically Allah, as the word Allah is more precise in its import, are

1. Existence;

2. Not beginning;

3. Not ending;

4. Self-subsistence, meaning not needing any place or determinant to exist; the aseity of God;

5. Dissimilarity to created things;

6. Uniqueness, meaning having no partner in His entity, attributes, or actions;

7. Omnipotent power;

8. Will;

9. Knowledge;

10. Life;

11. Hearing;

12. Sight;

13. Speech; such that He is:

14. Almighty;

15. All-willing;

16. All-knowing;

17. Living;

18. All-hearing;

19. All-seeing, and;

20. Speaking—through His attributes of power, will, knowledge, life, hearing, sight, and speech, not merely through His being.

B: The twenty attributes *necessarily impossible* of Allah (21-40) are the opposites of the previous twenty, such as non-existence, beginning, ending, and so on.

C: The one attribute *merely possible* of Allah (41) is that He may create or destroy any possible thing.

3.4 REASONING FROM EFFECT TO CAUSE THAT GOD CERTAINLY EXISTS

This proof starts from the very contingent nature of the universe. What is meant by contingency is existence after non-existence; therefore, anything which had no prior existence and then came into existence would be deemed as contingent. The held position, that we ourselves, everything around us and the universe around us are all contingent is agreed upon not only by Muslims, but also Jews, Christians and people of other creeds and philosophical positions.

A proof would have to consist of certainties, i.e. to contain certain premises, for it to impart certainty. The evidence in this proof would be the universe, while the essence of this evidence would be the contingent nature of the universe, and the direction this evidence leads to is the neediness of the universe to an instantiating cause that brought it into existence, while the indication of this evidence would be the impossibility of the universe coming into existence without an instantiating cause.

The contingent nature of the universe is understood from its very observance, whether we observe it in the heavens or on the earth; we see how it differs in nature in all aspects, whether we see all parts of the world or not, we know that

the material realm consists of bodies that fill a void. Whether that void is made up of tangible things like trees, rocks and humans, or intangible things like atoms, quarks and light—all of these have attributes that are contingent, accidental in their nature, and being renewed continuously until that solid body perishes.

The meaning of how contingents become established within bodies comes from the fact that their placement is continuous with that of those solid bodies. Their very existence follows that of the solid bodies that they are accidental to, not existing separately nor independent of those solid bodies. The word accidental would be preferable to the word attribute since the word accidental always implies contingency while the word attribute does not.

Movement, stillness, visible things like colours, things understood, like life, the five senses and their opposites are all intelligible, irrefutable proofs of the contingent nature of the universe as all these things come into existence after non-existence. At the very least, everything in the universe, and indeed the universe itself, is either moving or still. Since movement and stillness are both contingent, that would mean that they came into existence after non-existence. If someone insisted that the universe was eternal or that matter was eternal, then it would entail one of three things: firstly, either the universe or matter had been moving for eternity, or, secondly that it was still for eternity, or, thirdly that it was neither moving or still for eternity. All three suppositions are false.

The third proposal of universe and matter neither moving nor still is simply wrong because all matter always fills a void, and when it fills a void it is either moving or is still. This is understood by the eye of the mind.

As for the impossibility of the material universe being eternally still, if it were such, then it would not accept movement from place to place at all, because stillness in this case would be eternal without beginning and without having been preceded by non-existence, since the eternal does not accept non-existence. For an eternally still universe to suddenly move would mean that stillness is not actually eternal as it no longer exists. If stillness accepts perishing, then for its existence it needs a specifier as all that is possible can be either existent or non-existent; the specifier coming to tip the scale and bring that possible event into existence *ex-nihilo*. By being specified or willed into existence would mean that stillness is a contingent. The proof of the perishing nature of stillness is in our observance of it in the known universe when we see or can rationalise and abstract that still things can start moving, marking that stillness has perished in that thing once it has started moving.

The first proposal of an eternally moving material universe is also impossible by the same reasoning. An eternally moving material universe cannot become still, and if it did that would mean it was not eternal but contingent. That is because something that comes to an end, in this case movement, would be dependent on something else to determine its existence, and it would not be self-sufficient, and anything which is not self-sufficient would have to have been preceded by non-existence. There is an additional caveat to the notion of an eternally moving material universe or a motionless material universe, and that is that movement of solid bodies—meaning here anything that fills a void, whether a rock or light—moves from place to place. That would mean that when the moving material filled one void it would stop at that void, even momentarily, and then move on to the next void, which would entail renewal at every stage of its movement, clearly

implying its contingent nature. Therefore, an eternally moving material universe could not in fact be eternal.

3.5 SEVEN PRINCIPLES

From the above, it becomes clear that the entire universe is contingent in nature; that it came into existence after non-existence; that it was not there and then was there. Likewise, it cannot be deemed rational that any one part of the material universe be eternal because it is absolutely certain that every part of the universe is either still or moving, and it has already been rationally demonstrated that you cannot have a material universe with eternal movement or stillness.

This entire proof is built upon seven foundations or principles which are:

1. Establishing something additional existing to the solids;
2. Invalidating the view that this addition is self -established;
3. Invalidating that this addition transfers;
4. Invalidating that it conceals and then reappears;
5. The impossibility of the eternal perishing;
6. Establishing that material bodies never separate from those additions;
7. Establishing the impossibility of contingents that have no first.

Imām al-Sanūsī famously said that the seven gates of Hell are shut for the one who knows these seven principles[34].

3.6 THE SUMMARY OF PROOF FOR THESE SEVEN PRINCIPLES

The first principle, that of an additional existent to the material universe and its components is self-explanatory, as every rational being feels additional things to his own material body and the observation of the accidents.

The second principle, that those accidents which are additional to the material universe are not self-established, meaning it is impossible to have a characteristic without the host being described. You cannot have movement without the mover.

The third principle is that this accidental cannot transfer from one material thing to another—like stillness of one body moving into another body—as that would mean that the accident during the process of transference would be independent without a host, even if momentarily. However, it has already been substantiated that the accidental cannot exist independently as a characteristic.

The fourth principle is that the accidental cannot be concealed and then reappear. This would mean that while an object is moving there is no concealed stillness and while it is still there is no concealed movement. When the materials move, that is a new accidental and the previous accidental perishes, otherwise this would mean two contradictory accidentals are found in one host and that is absurd.

The fifth principle is that the eternal does not accept perishing. If it did perish, it would mean that it is only possible and not necessary, and possibilities are contingent.

The sixth principle is that bodies and the material universe are never void of any accidental, and that is established by the obvious fact that everything is either stationary or moving, both of which are contingents.

The seventh principle is that contingents with no first cannot exist because each component and individual of the everlasting chain of contingents would have a beginning. This individual beginning within the supposed endless chain would mean that the entire chain has a beginning from eternity. For if we had in the external realm a continuous chain of material contingents eternally from the past up to the present, the sum total of those contingents would need an initiator because the entire chain is possible, which means its non-existence and existence are within the realm of possibilities that require an initiator to bring it into existence.

This entire chain of eternal contingents would be made of individuals which would mean it is compounded, but since the compounded is always in need of its components, this neediness would negate a necessary existence. The cause of the infinite succession of contingent events cannot be itself and neither a part of itself because of the rational impossibility of a thing being the cause of itself and the impossibility of a thing preceding its own existence. If a part of the sequence is a cause for the entire sequence, it would mean that it has caused itself and the rest of the sequence. This is because that part is also a part of the entire sequence. If we do not make that part a cause for itself and the entire sequence, it would result in that part requiring a cause. If we suppose that A has caused X, Y and Z, then because of A's contingent nature it

would also require a cause, which would be any one of X, Y and Z, which have already been stated as being caused by A, and that is impossible also. Therefore, the cause of the entire sequence will be out of the sequence and would be necessary and not possible in its nature because all things are either possible, impossible or necessary. The possible here is that the contingents and their existence as an eternal sequence have been demonstrated as being impossible, while the second option, that of being rationally impossible, is not fit as to the cause of the sequence since the only solution would be one which is absolutely necessary.

3.7 THE PROOF BY WAY OF TALLYING OR APPLICATION [*BURHĀN AL-TAṬBĪQ*]

This thought experiment would work in the following way: if we suppose a sequence that goes back infinitely from where it reaches us, the last portion of this sequence which reaches us is not the cause of the sequence as it is right at the end. We will call that point Z. The remaining sequence will consist of effects and causes or an infinite number of events. The point after Z we will call Y. Let us suppose another sequence from point Y back to infinity which has an infinite number of contingents—we will name the first sequence as 1 and the second sequence as 2.

SEQUENCE 1 finishes at point Z and SEQUENCE 2 finishes at point Y. However, both sequences go back to infinity. Then what we do is tally both sequences.

Every point in SEQUENCE 1 is tallied with every point in SEQUENCE 2 *ad infinitum*. Of course, if someone objects that this cannot be done physically, the response would simply

be that it is a mental exercise and it can be done by way of summary through mental conceptualisation.

Once every point of SEQUENCE 1 has been tallied with SEQUENCE 2, this would mean that the increased is equal to the decreased, the decreased here being SEQUENCE 2. Some might say that an increase or decrease are unique qualities of that something which ends, but it can be responded to by saying that this increase and decrease is from one end and not at both ends of the sequence. The increase in our experiment is only by point Z. If it was supposed that the increased, SEQUENCE 1, was equal to the decreased, which is SEQUENCE 2, it would be validating the rationally impossible since we know that whole is always greater than the part.

Some could claim that the tallying of two sequences and their points is not necessarily accomplished because of the near equal size of the two sequences but rather because both of them are endless. The response would be that we definitely know that both sequences are either equal or different in size, and that the sequence with less numbers will always finish first, even if each point is not tallied and in this case we have SEQUENCE 2 finishing before SEQUENCE 1. When something is found in SEQUENCE 1, in this case Z, which does not have anything to be tallied within SEQUENCE 2, it would mean that SEQUENCE 2 has finished.

The fact that SEQUENCE 2 finishes means that it is not eternal. But more importantly it would mean that SEQUENCE 1 also comes to an end because SEQUENCE 1 has a limited increase to SEQUENCE 2, and that limited increase is the point Z. So, it has been decisively proven that SEQUENCE 2 is not eternal and neither is SEQUENCE 1 as it only increases upon SEQUENCE 2 by Z.

This would also mean that contingencies that are increasing can never be deemed as eternal, and eternal here means that which has no beginning and no end.

3.8 CANTOR'S SET THEORY

At this juncture someone may contest that if this proof is valid then all transfinite numbers come to an end. The response to this would be that this tallying relates to those things which have an actual existence as opposed to that purely from the imagination. At the very minimum, the first sequence should have a real existence. In our thought experiment this would be the world around us with all its events, accidentals and contingencies. Relative things, for instance, have no real external existence. This is why this proof cannot be contradicted with numbers. If someone were to say that we have SEQUENCE A and SEQUENCE B, and that SEQUENCE A starts with number 1 upwards to infinity, as numbers do not stop, while SEQUENCE B starts from number 2 upwards to infinity also. However, when we tally SEQUENCE A with SEQUENCE B, we can tally tens with one, or tens with hundreds, or hundreds with thousands. This objection would not disprove the proof because what is meant by the proof of tallying is real existents as opposed to imagination.

Additionally, what is meant by numbers never-ending is that you can continuously add in the mind and then multiply that number by the number of trees, stars and sand grains and then keep adding onto that number conceptually. But the eternal number will never have existence externally and neither could you actually comprehend it in the mind.

As for what Cantor termed as sets, they are constructs of the mind that do not actually exist extra-mentally. Like transfinite numbers cannot have an actual infinite existence, so too sets with infinite cardinality cannot have an actual existence because an infinite number of tasks can never be completed. A set also comprises of an infinity of numbers which do not actually exist but are imagined, with infinite numbers only a potentiality.

A final point is that anything that has a beginning—as with the number 1—it is the beginning of a set of real numbers and added to infinitely cannot be deemed as infinite, as that which has a start and then added to cannot be deemed as eternal in the way we ascribe to God. In this way, the everlasting nature of paradise means that paradise had a start and is sustained by God to exist forever. This would mean that paradise is a contingent creation that will be sustained infinitely but cannot in anyway be equated with God's aseity and eternal nature, as He has no beginning and no end and is not sustained by another.

3.9 THE ABSURDITY OF CIRCULAR REASONING & CONTINUOUS REGRESSION

By knowing two important rational impossibilities, many of the absurd claims made by atheists can be avoided. The first rational impossibility is circular reasoning [*dawr*], and the second is the continuous regression [*tasalsul*]—both of which are invalid.

A common question asked is that if God was the uncaused causer, what brought God into existence. If God did have a cause it would mean that He is contingent also, which leads

to the problem of continuous regression as well as what was stated earlier regarding contingents with no first cause. This is why it cannot be said that the universe explains itself.

Continuous regression means that if we say that the universe is contingent but was caused by, for instance, an alien life form, the question would arise as to what caused the alien life form. The answer might well be another alien life form did. However, the same question would arise again relating to the cause of that other alien life form. If the answer was again another alien life form, this would lead to a continuous regression of contingents. This is an impossibility since contingents by their very nature are instantiated *ex nihilo* and therefore depend on an ultimate cause that is self-sufficient, without beginning and that bears no resemblance to contingent beings in any way whatsoever.

Circular reasoning is also a rational impossibility. If it were proposed that A caused B and B also caused A, we would observe that the existence of A is dependent on B and likewise the existence of B is dependent on A. This should not be confused with circular conceptual concepts like saying: 'Tom is father to John and John is son to Tom; without Tom, John would not be a son, and without John, Tom would not be a father'. The type of circular reasoning that is deemed impossible is that which relates to causation or anything else that is rationally impossible, the logical absurdity in this reasoning is apparent as it would be necessary that both entities A and B precede each other. A contrasting example would be a heavy ball resting on a pillow that causes a depression in the pillow and the ball to sink down, with both the depression and the sinking existing simultaneously, or a key in the hand of a person that turns simultaneously with the hand when opening or locking a door.

Irrational circular reasoning refers to causation and instantiation. If it were true it would mean that both A and B precede one another and come into existence after one another. *Dawr* or circularity can be considered a type of *petitio principii*, a fallacy in which a conclusion is taken for granted in the premises; begging the question.

An example of such rational absurdities in popular science would be the statement made by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow in 'The Grand Design':

> "Because there is a law of gravity, the Universe can and will create itself out of nothing."[35]

This is circular reasoning because a law of nature depends for its own existence on the prior existence of the nature and material it describes. How can gravity, a law of nature, exist prior to the very inception of the universe? They write elsewhere in the same book:

> "M theory predicts that a great many universes were created out of nothing. Their creation does not require the intervention of some supernatural being or God. Rather, these multiple universes arise naturally from physical law."[36]

Of course, New Atheism swallows this hook, line, and sinker even though it just remains merely theoretical and not a rational or empirical fact but simply because it denies God. If physical law gave these universes existence, this again would lead to circular reasoning: how can we have physical law prior to the order of nature?

3.10 WHAT THE CAUSE OF THE UNIVERSE ENTAILS

It cannot be understood by the mind that this contingent and needy universe, which is possible, comes out of prior non-existence, as both its non-existence and existence were possible without a doer who specifies its existence with power and will. Aside from the deduction from effect to cause there is the proof from possibility which can be stated in the following syllogism:

> P1: The universe exists after it had not existed.
>
> P2: Every existent after prior non-existence has an originator that brings it into existence.
>
> C: Therefore, the universe had an originator that brought it into existence.

It has already been demonstrated that the universe is contingent because of its essential nature in having accidents which are themselves contingent since nothing in the universe is free from accidents and contingents like movement and stillness. Because of this intrinsic link, it would mean that the very material of the universe is contingent as it cannot come into existence prior to its own essential nature.

As for every contingent requiring an originator, that would be due to the impossibility of something originating itself and the fact that both its existence and non-existence would be equal in terms of probability, and for the non-existent to bring about its own existence is also a rational impossibility. Therefore, it would require something external and non-contingent to bring it into existence.

Roger Penrose, another physicist who has written popular works on Physics, writes in his book 'The Emperor's New Mind':

> "The chance of the existence of the universe is 1 in 10 to the power of 123. This would render the number too large to be written down in full, even if all the protons in the entire universe were used to write a digit on."[37]

The earlier syllogism presented was by coupling or in combination which means that both premises (the minor [*ṣughrā*] and major [*kubrā*] premises) have been coupled together with a common term [*al-ḥadd al-awsaṭ*] even though the other premises are different. What becomes necessitated by this combination is a third premise composed of two different terms as subject and predicate.

A way of presenting the argument differently is with the following syllogistic reasoning:

> P1: If the creator of the universe did not exist by necessity there would be no universe in existence.
>
> P2: However, the universe does exist.
>
> C: Therefore, a creator is necessarily existent.

The reasoning behind this is that the other two options for the Creator would be that He is impossible or possible. If He were impossible, then the contingent possible universe would not exist, but it does exist and therefore has a cause. If that cause was just possible, it would mean that He would also have a cause and that would lead to circular reasoning or

continuous regression which would entail our non-existence, but we do exist and our non-existence with existence is an impossible paradox. Therefore, the cause of the universe exists by necessity and the very existence of the universe does not combine with the impossibility of the cause or the possibility of the cause—the only rational combination with the necessary existence of the cause.

The significations in these proofs lies in both the possible nature of the universe and the contingent nature of the universe. The possible nature signifies the first necessary eternal cause because the possible is specified into existence by a specifier, since otherwise it would remain in non-existence because anything coming into existence without a specifier is an impossibility [*tarjīḥ bi-lā murajjiḥ*]. The contingent nature of the universe also signifies its originator, as has already been demonstrated. The universe would thus mean anything other than the creator, signifying to the divine cause in many ways.

The same could also be understood in how things around us are actualised, specified and finely tuned. For example, your very own existence as a sentient being attests that after non-existence, you now clearly exist. It was not you who brought yourself into existence but something did. It would have been totally impossible for you to have created yourself for that would have entailed that you could create other things which are less than yourself, and also that your creation preceded your very existence.

The greatest myth of our time is the assigning of attributes affirmed for God to nature. The inherent features and qualities of the physical world around us are truly natural, but nature has been deified. Children are not taught to speak yet they learn how to speak. Similarly, they are not taught to walk yet they learn to walk, all the while the environment

triggers what is found innately within us. Science observes the functions of our human nature including the genes and DNA. Scientific research goes on to describe the function of such things, like the function of DNA being passed on as a chemical structure to another chemical structure. Yet to ascribe a divine attribute to such a function, that the genes created our body and soul, is not science at all, rather just filling the gaps—as theism is typically accused of doing—and myth-making that blurs the line between science and belief. The way things stand and the way we are—we could have had any number of various traits from height, colour, intelligence, strength and so forth, all traits equal in their possibilities—we are actually specified with things that we have no choice over, with many of us ascribing those traits, the physical make up of ourselves and the world around us and its description, to nature and thus the arena of science. The error lies in ascribing such attributes to nature, not actually found in nature or scientifically, as in, factually proven. These attributes ascribed to nature are like the attributes of power, and will, as well as knowledge which is more implicit in popular atheist discourse.

What is it that actually allots us with certain traits and attributes, and later stops us growing at a certain age along with so many other biological facts? It cannot be a chemical process as that is just a description of what is occurring. The common answer to this deep question is nature, but that is in fact circular reasoning as nature is only an actual description of the physical world around us including ourselves and not the actualising force of what determines things to be what they are. If someone were to use a scientific description of what water is by stating it is the chemical combination of H_2O, it would still not tell us what actually determined water to be the way it is, since hydrogen and oxygen alone do not

always necessarily make water. There is the function of water in the water cycle, in the rivers and oceans; the specificity and actualisation of such things. This reasoning can be placed in a syllogism which would read something like:

> P1: One's very being has been specified with certain things from a host of numerous other possibilities.
>
> P2: Anything which is specified would mean the one who specified it has a will.
>
> C: The conclusion would be that the one who subjects your very being to those specifics is the doer of his choice.

3.11 'A UNIVERSE FROM NOTHING' BY LAWRENCE KRAUSS

This book was deemed ground-breaking for New Atheism, for it did for physics what Charles Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species' did for atheism in biology.

New Atheism claims that unlike organised theism or religion, it has no clergy and no blind conformity amongst its congregation, yet their adherents believe that a universe could come into existence from nothing and still deem it rational, and science, simply because a physicist said so. They little question the validity of such claims. If, however, they understood the science behind such claims they would know that it is not as literal as it is made out to be. It seems that Darwinism and Krauss's 'universe from nothing' have become dogmas. Anyone who questions the fact that they make little sense or that there is very little evidence—in Darwin's implied

origins of Homo Sapiens at least—is deemed as questioning that which is self-evident, with denial or scepticism of such theories as naive. New Atheism thus falls into that which it accuses religion of; namely, blind conformity, bias confirmation and inquisitions for the disbeliever.

Today, in the Western world, the inquisitions are seldom violent or represented by concentration camps and forceful conversions as they were in Communist Russia, or as they are for Uyghur Muslims in China today, but rather anyone sceptical towards New Atheism or who questions its dogmatic tenets must face vitriol, diatribe and insult. Richard Dawkins writes:

> "Even the last remaining trump card of the theologian, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?', shrivels up before your eyes as you read these pages. If 'On the Origin of Species' was biology's deadliest blow to supernaturalism, we may come to see 'A Universe from Nothing' as the equivalent from cosmology. The title means exactly what it says. And what it says is devastating."[38]

But does it mean exactly what it says on the cover? Prima facie 'nothing' means exactly that, nothing; absolutely nothing. As rational theologians point out, the non-existent is not a thing. The book would be more interesting if it were actual genuine nothingness, since genuine nothingness implies no special requirements for the stated nothing. So, does Krauss deliver that knockout blow as Richard Dawkins hoped he would? The answer is no. In the end, it is concluded that laws of physics do not come from nothing. The question is re-stacked for later by invoking a multiverse and wherein all universes with their own laws arise within it.

By leaving the origins of the multiverse out, Krauss brings us back to the initial problem; namely, where the laws of quantum mechanics themselves are supposed to have come from. He writes:

> "I have no idea if this notion can be usefully dispensed with or at least I don't know of any productive work in this regard."[39]

This is an admission made a few pages before the end of the book.

Laws in and of themselves are regarded as descriptions of the underlying materials of the universe, whether those considered are as electromagnetic fields or material particles. Relativistic quantum field theories do not count material particles as the elemental physical stuff of the world, but as arrangements within the field. These field arrangements can correspond to any number of particles, but sometimes they correspond to there being no particles at all—what are described as vacuum states, essentially deemed as unstable. This is the nothing indicated by Krauss, who differentiates this nothing—the vacuum states—from the nothing discussed in philosophy and rational theology.

So, in summary, what Krauss is describing as nothing is in fact a quantum vacuum. This nothing has various requirements like empty space and a law of quantum gravity, plus, he invokes a multiverse at the end. In other words, those quantum fluctuations redefine what nothing is.

Added to that, any scientific theory in order to have its equations working would have to have some input. Equations which have the same dimensions are known to

be dimensionally correct and equations within any scientific theory must be dimensionally correct, otherwise there is an error in the equation. If absolutely nothing was being placed in these equations, then those equations would not work; for example, anything multiplied by zero is zero.

Finally, if we say that the universe comes from absolutely nothing and God is nothing, then the universe comes from God. But if we say that the nothing here is not absolutely nothing but is the vacuum so described, then it is still something and we go back to the argument on contingency and possibility.

Chapter Nine of Krauss's book is entitled 'Nothing is Something', not exactly what you would have thought from the title of the book or from Dawkins panegyric and promise that the title means exactly what it says. Chapter Ten is then fittingly named: 'Nothing is Unstable'.

3.12 AFTERTHOUGHTS & VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

The atheist world view seems to have no absolute truths except those rooted in material fact or what are deemed as testable empirical truths, with therefore everything else becoming subjective. This has a knock-on affect with other things, not least the binding fabric of a society. The binding fabric of society could never be atheism, as atheism is the corrosive factor that leads to the fragmenting of any civilisation.

Nihilism and atheism, especially New Atheism, together, seem to go concomitantly towards a soulless, spiritually empty and aimless life, unless the only aim is to verbally brawl with religious people. Atheism is the ultimate assault on human reasoning and on the human soul and mind under the

guise of intelligence and scientific pretensions. Atheism attacks the very basic principles which are common sense, yet at the same time claiming itself to be the acme of intelligence.

First principles are of immense importance to understand why, ultimately, New Atheism undermines the mind, even though this is usually covered up in one of two ways or a combination of both. The first is by finding fallacious beliefs of superstitious people and conflating them with the underlying basis of theism. This would be equivalent to finding a religious practice or a superstitious belief that some may find odious and using the repulsive nature of that belief or practice to undermine the very belief in God.

The human mind alone, without recourse to any organised religion, could accept an ultimate necessary cause of the universe. New Atheism cannot because it has an axe to grind with what is termed as organised religion. The term 'organised religion' is problematic for the New Atheist because of what he sees of its bloody history, even though Communism, an atheist ideology, far outdid religion in terms of bloody violence in less than a century. A further problem with organised religion is its many laws and restrictions that inhibit the carnal desires.

The second method by which atheism masks its assault and denigration of human reasoning is by utilising unfamiliar terms to a lay audience, or by obfuscating its arguments.

3.13 OCKHAM'S RAZOR

An example of assault on reason is the rejection of common-sense principles, or what we would term as first principles. Atheists tend to reject many common-sense first principles;

principles like the law of causality, the principle of sufficient reason, the law of the excluded middle, and the law of non-contradiction—and there is Ockham's razor which is pertinent to mention at this point. It is also known as the principle of parsimony.

Even though this principle was found by Aristotle, it became associated with Ockham (D. 1342 CE) because of the style of his philosophy. Ockham defended Nominalism while condemning the doctrine of the universal as the worst error in philosophy. The principle of parsimony would be a simplification in theory construction. Simpler explanations are generally better than more complex ones.

3.14 THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON

This principle Leibniz believed was fundamental for all reasoning. Leibniz states:

> "There can be found no fact that is true or existent, or any true proposition, without there being a sufficient reason for its being so and not otherwise, although we cannot know those reasons in most cases."[40]

So, the principle in short, is nothing exists without a reason. This principle is intuitive and compelling. Later, Schopenhauer, distinguished four explanatory applications of the same principle, one of them relating specifically to explaining change in the physical world.

3.15 THE FALLACY OF COMPOSITION

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This fallacy exists because some inferences from parts to whole or whole to parts are wrong. Russell and Hume indicated this with regard to the 'Cosmological Argument'. By stating that parts of the universe are contingent and concluding that the universe is contingent is to commit the fallacy of composition. An example of the fallacy is like saying, 'This team comprises of strong athletes and therefore the team is strong.' Or the opposite—from the whole to the part—known as the fallacy of division, is like saying, 'This rope is strong and therefore every strand is strong.'

For Russell, this fallacy is committed when it is suggested that everything in the universe is contingent and therefore the universe is contingent. The response to this is that it is not necessary to draw that conclusion from the part alone as we know intuitively that the universe is either moving or still, and both movement and stillness are contingents. Also, the universe is a composite, and every composite is dependent on its compositions and therefore has a dependent existence which is the very meaning of contingency. For Russell the claim that everything in the universe is contingent could be made, but still the universe as a whole is necessary. This would fly in the face of Big Bang cosmology, by which it is claimed that the universe started 13.74 billion years ago, and anything that has come into existence after non-existence is our definition of contingency. The fact that the universe is observably expanding and expansion is a characteristic of a contingent, therefore also shows the universe is contingent.

The fallacy of composition can apply to fallacious arguments but not to arguments that are correct. An example of a fallacious argument would be, 'This aeroplane is made of

small bits of metal; therefore, the aeroplane is small.' But a correct argument could be, 'This aeroplane is made from metal; therefore, the aeroplane is metal.' To say, 'The universe is composed of contingents; therefore, the universe is contingent,' would be a correct argument therefore, without the fallacy of composition.

David Hume claims that a being cannot be necessary, since such a claim cannot be substantiated through sensory experience as all statements relating to existence are relations of ideas (synthetic in Kantian terms). Hume claims the statement relating to God's necessary existence can never be logically true or matter-of-fact (analytical in Kantian terms). However, this is a gross misunderstanding of what type of claim is being made regarding the essence of God, as it relates to the metaphysical necessity of God. This is when an existence of a metaphysical being is accepted and then something is stated regarding the properties of its nature to make a distinction from accidental properties.

3.16 A CAUSED UNIVERSE & THE CAUSAL PRINCIPLE

It is epistemically necessary and self-evident that everything that is contingent—meaning that which did not exist prior to its coming into existence—has a cause and is intuitively known. The denial of this principle is held to be an assault on reason and the human mind. Immanuel Kant describes the causal necessity as 'a bastard of the imagination, impregnated by experience.' Kant, Hume and others held that it has no legitimate application in the world. Cause according to Hume is one object followed by another. Hume defines a cause as 'an object, followed by another, where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second.'

This necessity of cause and effect is termed as hypothetical or conditional necessity. So, according to such empiricists, the laws of nature are not necessary truths. This is interesting as that is what is termed a miracle in Islamic theology, which, by definition, is a violation of the norm which then falls into the empirical or habitual judgements discussed in the previous chapter on epistemology.

However, if we were to just accept the universe as brute fact, as Russell states, then this would impede scientific research as people would stop there without further investigation into the laws that govern the universe, even though we say that those laws are governed by the necessary eternal cause of the universe.

3.17 THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE & THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The anthropic principle is one where the universe has certain features by dint of the fact that human observers exist to observe with their eyes and minds. The weak anthropic principle in cosmology is that the universe must have properties necessary for the existence of observers, or universes that allow cognitive beings. The strong anthropic principle asserts, controversially, that the various physical constants are explained by the essentiality of human existence. This principle exposes how improbable the coincidence of human life actually is, yet anthropic principles are cited as an alternative to the argument from design.

A teleological argument is from the Greek root *telos*, meaning perfection, goal and purpose. Not all teleological arguments presuppose intelligent design and may be justified

through an analysis of the function of what is being observed and an aetiological account. This is found in biology and economics, for instance. It should be stated here that functional analysis and aetiological study do not contradict the method of Islam and is in fact something the Qur'ān encourages. However, the teleological arguments used by theists do infer the presence of a grand creator and designer of the universe. Philosophers typically divided in two camps, the tender and the tough minded; so too in science there is a distinction between scientists who although may observe the same data, carry out the same experiments and draw the same conclusion, yet take different implications regarding the ramifications of that science.

The fine tuning and intelligibility of the cosmos, beauty, love, consciousness, the simplicity of mathematics, all prove the existence of God. As evil is oft cited by atheists to disprove God, theists can cite all the above as well as ethics, morality, justice, truth and many more things. This might be called a cumulative argument for God.

Even if not convinced by any one argument, the entire discussion if analysed holistically, amounts to a cumulative argument and certainty that there is indeed a God.

3.18 GOD OF THE GAPS

When scientists study physical matter, from ourselves to all our surroundings, they uncover its function, attempting to explain and understand its cause and reason. When science cannot proceed, at least momentarily, or reaches its limits with many questions remaining unanswered, filling those unanswered questions by simply referring to God is referred to

as 'God of the gaps'. As soon as those gaps are bridged then the role of God is diminished as functionality and causality become more scientifically evident.

Theists who are not scientists or have not studied science will always ascribe all phenomena to God but not from a scientific standpoint. Doing this in reverse, so to speak, as a scientific method would be fallacious. If there are scientific questions that have not been answered, then resorting to filling the gaps via God as a scientific hypothesis or explanation is deeply flawed and misleading. Such problems stem from conflating science with rational theism, or viewing rational theism as a form of scientific theory, and not least, the clear misunderstanding of what is meant by saying 'God caused everything' and what is meant by 'scientific research'.

Limiting all truth to science is also fallacious. Science is the observation of regularities and knowing the functionality of the material world by experimentation and accepting the falsifiability of any proposed theory. Rational theology only points out what everything signifies in the deeper spiritual and conscious sense, and it is not proposed as a scientific theory. Rational theology is an a posteriori deductive argument from signification of everything observed and felt. This is why science flourished in many centuries of early Islamic civilization alongside the development of the *Kalām* methodology, as the two do not clash.

God's existence may not be evident for atheists in asteroids and quantum physics, but for the theist everything in the universe signifies God and is a manifestation of God's divine attributes and actions. It is not a scientific hypothesis. A finely tuned universe signifies divine knowledge, will, power and divine existence. When studying a finely tuned universe or finding gaps in scientific explanations it would be wrong

to attempt to explain those gaps by conflating God with a scientific theory.

A finely tuned universe would entail design but not a scientific theory. The human consciousness is cognizant that pure mathematics applies in the universe and physical elements behave in periodic regularity and that what is observed is quantifiable via mathematical formulae as to how everything interacts. When a human being observes this, is he arrogant and conceited enough to say this signifies a grand design? When we read about recent scientific discoveries and those in prior times observing the uniformity of everything in the known world, it signifies the intricate fine tuning that permits and nurtures life. Atheists will typically appeal to imperfections in its design and the perishing nature of the universe, as well as the existence of evil and odious entities but finer tuning and teleological argument rightly confirm that the universe to occur by chance is mathematically and rationally impossible.

Another consideration is that the overwhelming mass of the universe is not actually bio-friendly which would mean that planet Earth and if there were any other places with life are almost unique, further limiting the possibility of mere chance.

In 'Just Six Numbers', Sir Martin Reese elaborates on six numbers without which life would not be possible. Like Paul Davies and other learned physicists writing popular works on the universe, Sir Martin is not advocating theism but science. From these six numbers, two of them relate to the basic forces; two fix the size and overall 'texture' of our universe and determine whether it will continue forever; and two more fix the properties of space itself.

The first number deemed so crucial to life is huge and equal to 1 times 10 to the power of 12 ($1x10^{12}$). The number measures the strength of the electrical force that holds atoms together divided by the force of gravity between them. If it were any smaller, only a short-lived miniature universe could exist. No creatures could grow larger than insects and there would be no time for biological evolution.

The second number is 0.007 and defines how firmly atomic nuclei bind together and how all the atoms on earth were made. Its value controls the power from the sun and more sensitively how stars transmute hydrogen into all the elements in the periodic table. Carbon and Oxygen are common while Gold and Uranium are rare because of what happens in the stars. If this number were 0.006 or 0.008, then we could not exist.

The third number Ω (omega) measures the amount of material in our universe. While galaxies diffuse gas and dark matter, Ω tells us of the relative importance of gravity and expansion in the universe. If this ratio was too high relative to a particular critical value, then the universe would have collapsed long ago. Had it been too low, no galaxies or stars would have been formed. The initial expansion speed seems to have been finely tuned.

The fourth number, λ (lambda), was, Reese states, the biggest scientific news of 1998. An unsuspected new force, a cosmic, anti-gravity controls the expansion of our universe. Even though it has no discernible effect on a scale of less than a billion light years, it is destined to become ever more dominant over gravity and other forces as our universe becomes ever darker and emptier. Fortunately for us and very surprisingly to theorists, λ is very small, otherwise, its effect would have stopped galaxies and stopped stars from forming and cosmic

evolution would have been stifled before it could even begin.

The fifth number is *Q*, the seed for all cosmic structures, stars, galaxies and clusters of galaxies that were all imprinted in the Big Bang. The fabric of our universe depends on this number *Q*, which represents the ratio of two fundamental energies and is roughly 1/100,000 in value. If *Q* were even smaller, the universe would be inert and structure-less, and conversely, if *Q* were even larger, the universe would be a violent place in which no stars or solar systems could survive; one dominated by vast black holes.

The sixth crucial number has been known for centuries, although is now viewed from a new perspective. It is the number of spatial dimensions in our world. *D* equals to 3. Life would not exist if *D* were 2 or 4, with time being a fourth dimension distinctively different from the others.

Sir Martin Rees writes:

> "These six numbers constitute a recipe for the universe. Moreover, the outcome is sensitive to their values. If anyone of them were to become untuned, there would be no stars and no life. Is this tuning a coincidence or is it the providence of a divine creator? I take the view that it is neither."[41]

Scientific data and research should never be opposed by religion and certainly is not opposed by the *Kalām* methodology, just as the certainty of undisputable, unequivocal tenets of Islam cannot be contradicted by factual science—at least that is the proposition that the rational theology of the *Kalām* scholars claim and which is being supported here. What scientific fact signifies, however, is altogether of a different matter. It is more like the perfect conjunction of the moon with the sun

during an eclipse, something which could never happen if the moon was further from or indeed closer to the earth.

Scientific data informs both the theist and the atheist. The theist will internally see the signs of God, the atheist will see chance and coincidence, yet both groups will agree to the science.

3.19 ALIEN OF THE GAPS

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Francis Crick, who with James Watson discovered the structure of DNA, proposed in 'Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature' a theory known as panspermia. *Pan/pas* in Greek means 'all', and *sperm* meaning 'seed'. Crick, to avoid explaining how life emanated from lifeless chemicals proposed panspermia. Crick entertained the idea that some form of primordial life was shipped to the earth billions of years ago in spaceships—by supposedly 'more evolved' and 'advanced' alien beings. This was the conclusion of an atheist and renowned scientist after the double helix DNA structure was shown to be incompatible with the origin of life from any earthly cause. Life could not evolve from lifeless chemicals under any condition on earth, so something other than God was needed and what better idea than that of aliens!

If a religious person reasoned in the same manner regarding such things it would be deemed superstition. Crick's reasoning is accepted solely through his scientific credibility, despite the proposition amounting to the fallacy of appeal to authority, notwithstanding that the theory is not completely untestable. It is ironic that such a famous Nobel scientist could interpret scientific facts and data to come up with another theory to fit his own world view, exactly what theists are disparaged for

doing. Thus, it is essential to distinguish between scientific fact, empirical or testable data that has never been falsified and the inferences made from it. The former is unbiased and not tainted by religion or atheism, while the latter is an interpretation of the facts. Incidentally, Richard Dawkins is on record for stating that belief that an alien life form placed life on earth is a possibility difficult to disprove. In a response to a question regarding Intelligent Design during an interview, Dawkins said:

> "It could come about in the following way, it could be that, that some earlier time somewhere in the universe an earlier civilisation evolved by probably some kind of Darwinian means to a very high level of technology and designed a form of life they seeded onto perhaps this planet. Now, that is a possibility and an intriguing possibility and I suppose it's possible that you might find evidence for that if you look at the details of our chemistry, molecular biology, you might find a signature of some sort of designer and that designer could well be a higher intelligence from elsewhere in the universe."

Such reasoning does not actually answer the puzzle of creation, it just regresses the question to an earlier alien life form, and is certainly not science, merely a standard example of continuous regress. If a theist was to reason in such a manner they would be ridiculed by Dawkins and his acolytes.

Is the claim for a finely tuned universe, fit for life, necessarily anthropocentric? If it is, then this would mean, as the late Christopher Hitchens claimed, that religion is arrogance and hubris, not to mention the fact that God waited millions of years to send the revelation for the salvation of humanity. The Muslim response would be, with regard to the claim

that the universe is anthropocentric, the lines in the Qur'ān which clearly say, ﴾*Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind; but most of mankind know not*﴿ [Qur'ān 40:57]. With regard to salvation, then the Qur'ān states, ﴾*Whoever chooses to be guided, it is only for their own good. And whoever chooses to stray, it is only their own loss. No soul burdened with sin will bear the burden of another. And We would never punish a people until We have sent a messenger to warn them*﴿ [Qur'ān 17:15]. This would mean that punishment does not reach those people who have not received a message of guidance. The subject of evil and philosophical questions around it will be discussed in Chapter 4, and the subject of Islam and science in Chapter 5.

The uniformity of our lives and the universe around us may be seen as an overall, cumulative and decisive proof for the existence of a divine creator with divine attributes. The atheist may object to this by appealing to the claim that human minds are pattern-seeking and need to make sense of their surroundings. As previously mentioned, however, when we observe the mathematical nature of the world around us and everything else, it becomes self-evident that nothing occurs merely by accident.

'Integrated complexity' was the term employed by Antony Flew after he changed his position from atheism to accepting a creator. The complexity of everything is so integrated or intertwined that if any one component malfunctioned life would not be possible, and even if life were possible many things that we benefit from would be done away with.

To name a few; the four seasons and the vegetation resulting in seasonal food which benefits humans and animals. The rising and setting of the sun. The constellations of stars

and how they change every three months and their differences in the northern hemisphere and the southern hemisphere. How in ancient times farmers would use the stars for cultivation. How the stars and winds provide navigation in the oceans. The northern star. The various human languages and human civilisations. The creative achievements human beings can make purely from their brains. The numerous resources that humans and animals alike utilise for their own benefit and sustainability. The medicinal benefits of plants and how both human beings and animals consume wild shrubs for a cure, and the subsequent development of medicines. Fresh drinkable water. Trees with all their various fruits. Different fingerprints for every single human being—no two ever the same. The human DNA and the very origins of life. The human mind and consciousness. The deep spiritual lesson of life and unique human experiences.

From the rain forests to the deserts, from the mountains to the cities and the various places in between, on an earth that yet remains largely undiscovered, there are signs with those who have eyes that are open, minds that are broad and hearts that have not been sealed. There are signs in everything we see; from the bees collecting pollen and eating nectar and flying back to the hive to disgorge the same from their stomachs to produce honey, to their performing a dance of coordinates to inform the other bees of the location of the pollen, not unsimilar to the ant with its huge colonies and methods of communications. Or the spider when it weaves its extraordinary web with its geometric patterns, or the different species of silkworm in the mulberry trees and how humans cultivate them. Or how cows eat from a field and chew for hours to give a milk that carries all the nutrients extracted from that natural habitat.

The majority of human life, if viewed in this fashion, reveals a harmony in most things. Where it does not reveal such harmony and uniformity is where you find the atheist objecting to God and His existence. This is the point at which we must turn to the objections and the case made against God; such as why He would permit evil and various other things.

3.20 THE NAMES & ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH

Before concluding this chapter, let us take a look at how everything around us is in fact a manifestation of the names of God as known in Islam and how the Muslim views the world. The absolute perfection of God is limitless, His divine attributes endless and His divine names eternal. Some of those divine names have been revealed in the Qurʾān and the prophetic traditions.

Let us begin with those names which many would be unaware that God has and yet we observe the manifestations of those names in our daily lives:

- He is 'The Subduer' [*al-Qahhār*], yet He is also 'The Most Merciful' [*al-Raḥmān*].
- He is 'The Withholder' [*al-Māniʿ*], yet He is also 'The Enricher' [*al-Mughnī*].
- He is 'The Avenger' [*al-Muntaqim*], yet He is also 'The Ever-Pardoning' [*al-Tawwāb*].
- He is 'The Giver of death' [*al-Mumīt*], yet He is also 'The Giver of life' [*al-Muḥyī*].
- He is 'The Judge' [*al-Ḥakam*], yet He is also 'The Pardoner' [*al-ʿAfuww*].

- He is 'The Compeller' [*al-Jabbār*], yet He is also 'The Most Loving' [*al-Wadūd*].

Notice here that the names of Allah encompass both rigour and beauty; as opposed to the Christian narrative which crumbles when faced with the paradox of evil. All the names of Allah supplement each other and are complementary, although appearing as opposites.

A further twenty attributes, necessary in the right of Allah, follow with a succinct proof.

Necessary in His right are:

1. Existence [*wujūd*]. The opposite to this is non-existence [*ʿadam*]. The proof established for it is the very existence of creation.
2. Infinite pre-existence [*qidam*]. The opposite to this is contingency [*ḥudūth*]. The proof established for it is that if He were contingent, He would be dependent upon an entity to make Him contingent. This is impossible.
3. Eternal [*baqā*ʾ]. The opposite to this is cessation [*fanā*ʾ]. The proof established for it is that if He was prone to cessation, He would be contingent. This is impossible.
4. Opposition to the contingent [*al-mukhālafa li al-ḥawādith*]. The opposite to this is similitude to the contingent [*al-mumāthala li al-ḥawādith*]. He does not have a hand, eye, ear, or anything from amongst the attributes of contingency. The proof established for it is that if He bore a similarity with that which is contingent, He would be contingent.

This is impossible.

5. Self-established [*al-qiyām bi al-nafs*]. The opposite to this is dependence [*al-iḥtiyāj*]. He is not dependent upon a place or particularisation. The proof established for it is that if He was dependent upon a place, He would be an attribute of that place. His existence as an attribute is impossible. Also, if He was dependent upon a being, He would be contingent, and His existence as being contingent is impossible.
6. Oneness [*waḥdāniyya*] in essence [*dhāt*], attributes [*ṣifāt*] and actions [*afʿāl*]. The opposite to this is plurality [*taʿaddud*]. Oneness in essence means that His Essence is not composed of numerous parts. Oneness in attributes means that He does not possess two attributes or more of the same genus, similarly there is no one who possesses an attribute similar to any of His. Oneness in actions means that none other than Him possess an action from His actions. The proof established for it is that if He was plural nothing in creation would have been created.
7. Omnipotence [*qudra*]. This is a pre-eternal attribute established with His divine essence. By it He brings into existence and by it takes out of existence. The opposite to this is incapability [*ʿajz*]. The proof established for it is that if He was incapable, nothing in creation would exist.
8. Divine Will [*irāda*]. This is a pre-eternal attribute established with His divine essence, by it He specifies what is possible; either by bringing it into existence or by taking it out of existence. The opposite to this is compulsion [*karāha*]. The proof

established for it is that if He was compelled to perform an action, He would be incapable. This is impossible.

9. Knowledge [*ʿilm*]. This is a pre-eternal attribute established with His divine essence, by it He knows things. The opposite to this is ignorance [*jahl*]. The proof established for it is that if He was ignorant, He would not be able to intend anything. This is impossible.
10. Life [*ḥaya*]. This is a pre-eternal attribute established with His divine essence, this attribute substantiates His attribution with knowledge and other attributes. The opposite to this is death [*mawt*]. The proof established for it is that if He was dead; He would not be Omnipotent, be One who wills, or be One who knows. This is impossible.
11. Hearing and 12. Sight [*al-samʿ wa al-baṣr*]. These are pre-eternal attributes established with His divine essence, by them He unveils existence. Their opposites are deafness and blindness [*al-ṣamam wa al-ʿamā*]. The proof established for it is His saying, ﴾*He is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing*﴿ [Qur'ān 42:11]. This is a textual proof which is sufficient for Muslims, and for an atheist only after he accepts the divine revelation of the Qur'ān, such as the following attribute.
13. Divine Speech [*kalām*]. This is a pre-eternal attribute established with His divine essence, it is not in the form of letters or sounds. The opposite to this is dumbness [*bakm*]. The proof established for it is His saying, ﴾*Allah spoke to Moses*﴿ [Qur'ān 4:64].

It is necessary in His right, His Existence as being:

14. Omnipotent [*qādir*]. The opposite to this is His Existence as being incapable [*ʿājiz*].
15. One who wills [*murīd*]. The opposite to this is His Existence as being compelled [*kārih*].
16. One who knows [*ʿālim*]. The opposite to this is His Existence as being ignorant [*jāhil*].
17. Alive [*ḥayy*]. The opposite to this is His Existence as being dead [*mayyit*].
18. All-seeing and 19. All-hearing [*samīʿ wa baṣīr*]. Their opposites are His Existence as being deaf and blind [*aṣamm wa aʿmā*].
20. One who speaks [*mutakallim*]. The opposite to this is His Existence as being dumb [*abkam*].

Finally, there is one attribute which is permissible in His right:

- The performance of every possible action or its abandonment [*fiʿl kull mumkin wa tarki-hi*]. The proof established for it is that if the performance of an action or its abandonment was necessary upon Allah, the permissible would become necessary or impossible. This is impossible.

"The example of patient suffering is in itself the most precious of all lessons to an impatient world."

—Sherlock Holmes in 'The Veiled Lodger'

"*What is the meaning of it, Watson?*" said Holmes solemnly as he laid down the paper. "*What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.*"

—Sherlock Holmes in 'The Adventure of the Cardboard Box'

CHAPTER FOUR

On Evil, Theodicy & Philosophical Sundries

4.1 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL & SUFFERING

SOME HAVE DESCRIBED the question of evil as the best proof against God. The problem of evil also has deep emotional and psychological ramifications for many people and is a corollary of many other notions and premises. Pertinently, how does one define evil and who is defining it? Evil is something relative and can only be defined by its creator, otherwise it becomes relative to the one beholding it. For example, the poison of a snake is good for the snake but bad for other creatures. Is the poison good or bad, and who can actually define it as either one or the other? Therefore, is the mind alone sufficient in comprehending what is good and bad, or what is beautiful and ugly in actions, morals and precepts?

Before delving into these questions and much deeper philosophical inquiries, let us analyse the argument against God as presented in a logical syllogism and then in a more popular emotional form. There are some clear fallacies in these arguments that will be highlighted and explained. Here is one form of the argument against God, from the point of evil:

> P1: If God exists, then God is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. If God is omnipotent, then God has the power to eliminate all evil. If God is omniscient, then God knows when evil exists. If God is morally perfect, then God has the desire to eliminate all evil.
>
> P2: Evil exists. If evil exists and God exists, then either God does not have the power to eliminate all evil, or does not know when evil exists, or does not have the desire to eliminate all evil.
>
> C: Therefore, God doesn't exist.

A much more popular and provocative formulation of this argument was presented by the comedian Stephen Fry. By unravelling and invalidating the entire syllogism and in particular dissecting the first premise, we will analyse how it renders the entire argument sterile: 'If God exists, then God is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect.'

4.2 WHAT STEPHEN FRY SAID

Stephen Fry was being interviewed on Irish television by Gay Byrne and made now famous statements regarding God which mainly revolves around the problem of evil. The following is a transcript of that interview:

> INTERVIEWER: "Suppose it's all true and you walk up to the pearly gates and you are confronted by God. What would Stephen Fry say to him, her or it?"
>
> STEPHEN FRY: "I will basically (it's known as theodicy, I think) ... I'll say, 'Bone cancer in children? What's that

about? How dare you! How dare you create a world where there is such misery that is not our fault!' It's not right. It is utterly, utterly evil. Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid god who creates a world that is so full of injustice and pain? That's what I'd say."

INTERVIEWER: "And you think you're going to get in?"

STEPHEN FRY: "Oh, but I wouldn't want to. I wouldn't want to get in on his terms. They're wrong.

Now, if I died and it was Pluto, Hades and if it were the twelve Greek gods, then I'd have more truck with it because the Greeks didn't pretend not to be human in their appetites, and in their capriciousness and their unreasonableness; they didn't present themselves as being all-seeing, all-wise, all-kind, all-munificent; because the god who created this universe—if it was created by God—is, quite clearly, a maniac, utter maniac, totally selfish.

We have to spend our life on our knees thanking him. What kind of god would do that?

Yes, the world is very splendid, but it also has in it insects whose whole life-cycle is to burrow into the eyes of children and make them blind. They eat outwards from the eyes. Why did you do that? Why? Why did you do that to us? You could easily have made a creation where that didn't exist. It is simply not acceptable.

So, you know, atheism is not just about not believing there's a god; but, on the assumption there is one, what kind of god is it? It's perfectly apparent that he is monstrous, utterly monstrous, and deserves no respect whatsoever. The moment you banish him your life becomes simpler, purer, cleaner—more worth living in my opinion."

INTERVIEWER: "That sure is the longest answer to that question I've ever had in this entire series. Thank you so much Stephen."

STEPHEN FRY: "Well, there wasn't a thunderbolt was there?"

The fallacies contained in Stephen Fry's statement on God and evil turn largely on two premises. If you note in the interview, Stephen Fry points out his understanding of God's attributes and describes God as 'all-kind' and 'all-munificent', truly names of God, but he omits other names of God, covered in the previous chapter, which linked to the discussion on the divine will of God and His manifestations through different names. If Stephen Fry had kept those names of God in mind, that part of his objections to God would not count for anything. He also asserted that if there were a God, He should not be obeyed, as His terms for getting into Paradise are wrong, and ridiculing His so-called demand on us to stay on our knees throughout our lives.

This first premise in the argument-against-God syllogism cited above, from the point of view of evil, would be an acceptance of God's omnipotence and omniscience, even though generally, atheists would not concede this point, denying the very existence of God. Even if an atheist did accept it for the sake of argument, it would only be acceptable in the case for evil being levied against God.

Before breaking down the entire argument, it is essential to correctly understand each claim made. The first claim is the ascription of omnipotence to God. Omnipotence is a divine attribute that is established with God. An attribute of God would be something additional to the essence of God, and the attribute of omnipotence is an attribute by which God creates and instantiates possibilities *ex nihilo*.

4.3 THE CONNECTIONS OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The connections of attributes with any thing in the external

realm can be categorised in three ways:

1. Connection by way of signification;
2. Connection by uncovering, and;
3. Connection by effectuation.

The first would be like the connection of speech to what it signifies. When a person speaks, their words will signify meanings in the external realm, concepts in the mind or abstract thoughts. This connection of speech and to what it signifies is the first type of connection between an attribute and other things.

The second type of connection which was mentioned is that of uncovering; for example, the connection between knowledge and that which is known, since knowledge uncovers that which is unknown, or the connection between sight and what is observable, as the sight uncovers those things which are observed. Similarly, the connection between hearing and the heard, with the faculty of hearing uncovering the sound of audible things and indeed the comprehension of what can be comprehended, since comprehension uncovers the nature of whatever is uncovered. Knowledge, sight, hearing and comprehension are all attributes which link to an uncovering of whatever they are connected to.

The third type of connection refers to the attribute of will and that which is carried out by the will or the attribute of power, as well as the inverse connection when things are acted upon or effected by the attribute of power.

As was mentioned in the chapter on epistemology, judgements of the mind, that emanate solely from the mind with-

out recourse to habit or experimentation, are of three categories; those which are the necessary, the possible and the impossible. Or we can say, that which is necessarily true, the conceivable, and the inconceivable.

Some object to this, saying that even judgements that occur in the mind have some recourse to observed external data. The response to this claim is that a person born blind, who may have not observed objects moving or being at rest, comprehends these concepts from the mind alone, and yet will comprehend concepts like colours and other things. Such a person can give judgements from the mind without recourse to external observation. Likewise, the one born blind and the one not born blind will know that an object cannot be still and moving at the same time; a category of rational judgement which belongs to the impossible.

The divine power or omnipotence of God only relates to that which is rationally possible and not to that which is necessary or impossible. The reason for it not connecting to the necessary is that if the absolutely necessary was subdued to the divine power it could undergo change and therefore would not be necessary, as it is liable to change, entailing change to the very essence of the necessary which would mean it was not necessary. Similarly, divine power not connected to the rationally impossible would render the rationally impossible no longer impossible but able to undergo change, which would change the very nature of what it meant to be rationally impossible. The very meaning of something being rationally impossible is that it has no real existence, rather a confusion of concepts having no real combined existence, like the concept of a circular triangle. Therefore, it would be irrational to say can God create a circular triangle.

The fact that divine power is not connected to the necessary or the impossible does not entail any fault or defect in the divine power. On the contrary, it would be absurdity to associate divine power with necessities and impossibilities. Nor does it entail inability or sterility; if someone were to say that a sword does not write like a pen, that is because the function of a sword is different to a pen, yet the inability of the sword to write does not entail any fault or defect in the sword.

4.4 THE BOULDER QUESTION

Can God create a boulder so huge that He cannot pick it up after making it? This is a common question, by which, like many others, the atheist will think he has dumbfounded the theologian. This question is flawed because in effect the questioner is asking whether God can make Himself powerless. This is where the contradiction lies; if God did create such a boulder, He would subsequently become powerless through being unable to pick up the boulder. The questioner is thinking that if God could not make such a boulder, that would mean He was powerless. To the questioner it would mean that whichever answer was given the answer would imply that God was powerless. However, once we realise that the divine power of God can only be associated with rational possibilities, not the impossible or necessary, then the defective nature of the question is revealed. For God to render Himself powerless is impossible and therefore there can never be a boulder that He cannot pick up.

An additional point to note is that the divine power of God can only relate to that which He wills. If the divine will has not willed for something to come into existence then the divine

power will not bring it into existence, and this is the meaning of the statement: 'Surely God is powerful over everything.' Everything in this sense means everything that is rationally possible and everything that He wills to occur. His divine will cannot connect to the instantiation of the impossible and the necessary for reasons mentioned earlier. Such types of questions were not an uncommon occurrence in the past. An example may be given; that of when Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī was asked regarding the story of the Prophet Idrīs ﷺ and Satan.

4.5 SATAN'S TRICKY QUESTION

It is said, even though it is not in any authenticed source, that Satan took the form of a man and approached the Prophet Idrīs ﷺ while the latter was sewing some clothes. While sewing, the Prophet ﷺ was proclaiming the glory of God and extolling His praise.

Satan had with him an empty egg shell and used it to ask his tricky question, "Can God place the world into this eggshell?"

The Prophet Idrīs ﷺ responded by saying, "God is Powerful. He could place the entire universe into the hole of this needle.' Then to teach Satan a lesson, Idrīs ﷺ poked Satan's eye with the needle[42].

The anecdote is cited by some to say that the omnipotence of God is not restricted to what we term as the rationally possible, but also extends to the domains of what is deemed as rationally impossible; the immense universe, as it is, fitting into an egg shell is a rational impossibility. Yet the Prophet Idrīs ﷺ said that it could be done.

This conundrum in the form of this anecdote was posed to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī and other *Kalām* specialists as a problem since it ostensibly validates the impossible being done by God's divine power. The response given was simply that what the Prophet Idrīs ﷺ had intended, was that God could shrink the universe to make it fit into an eggshell or make an egg huge enough to contain the universe, as both of these fall into the rubric of possibility. The Prophet Idrīs ﷺ merely shortened his answer as the meaning was self-evident and besides that, Satan has never been a sincere seeker of truth.

4.6 DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

The second part of the premise of the syllogism mentioned previously postulates that if God existed then He is Omniscient, All-knowing. This would mean that God has the attribute of divine knowledge. The question is what does divine knowledge relate to from the point of view of rational possibilities.

Firstly, it is pertinent to mention that the attribute of divine knowledge is not an effecting or executive attribute like omnipotence. What is meant is that it does not instantiate beings into and out of existence being unrelated to such objectives, but rather is an attribute that uncovers what would otherwise be unknown. Uncover here does not entail that whatever is unveiled was veiled to God and then became unveiled. Rather it means that knowledge of all things has always been known to God and His knowledge is not acquired or contingent. It would also mean that the knowledge of God does not entail compartmentalisation or a thinking process like that of human knowledge; instead it is an eternal knowledge that

has no beginning and no end, cannot be subtracted from or added to, and is an absolutely necessary attribute. If God did not have divine knowledge then everything in the universe and creation beyond the universe would not exist, as someone who has deficient or incomplete knowledge would not be able to create the creation we observe; from the finely tuned universe and human brain to what we cannot observe with the naked eye, from quarks to whatever exists beyond them as well as what is in the metaphysical realm.

Knowledge of God relates to whatever is rationally possible, as well as what is impossible and necessary. The knowledge of God which relates to the necessary would be inclusive of knowledge of Himself and His divine attributes, and thus, since His essence and attributes are eternal, His knowledge of them would also be eternal.

4.7 THE NECESSARY & THE ESSENTIAL

Sometimes the term rationally necessary or rationally impossible can become confused with what is extrinsically necessary or impossible. An example of something extrinsically impossible would be a tree growing without roots. Would that mean God could not create a tree without roots? The answer clearly would be that God could create a tree without roots, as the fundamental need of trees for roots is but a creation of God who made it necessary. But this should not be confused with that which is essentially or intrinsically necessary or impossible, as the intrinsically necessary or impossible relates to that which can never be changed, and only the mind or rational judgement can determine that.

If God knows everything that we do or will do, does this mean He compels us to carry out what we do even though we think it is out of our own volition? The answer is no. God does not compel us to do what we can do using our own volition despite the fact that God knows what we will do, and this is because the attribute of omniscience is an attribute that uncovers what would otherwise be unknown and is not an attribute that is effective like the attribute of omnipotence, for instance. A lamp, to give an example, places light on objects that lie ahead but does not affect those objects in the sense of breaking or fixing them, it just uncovers what lies ahead. Likewise, the knowledge that someone has may uncover that which is known to the one with knowledge and unknown to others but does not have effective power.

4.8 ON HUMAN FREEWILL

Human freewill and its relationship to the omnipotence and omniscience of God, as well as punishment, hellfire, good and bad deeds and other daunting subjects, are often misconstrued by atheists and 'religious' bigots who think in absolutes or suffer from a 'splitting disorder' of black and white thinking.

Freewill in accordance to the *Kalām* methodology of Sunnī rationalism relates to our limited choice that we have in the acquisition or earning of deeds. The concept of *mukallaf* means a legally responsible person and is synonymous with the one being addressed to by God in the Qur'ān and is subsequently held responsible for the specific choices he makes.

A careful understanding of who exactly is a legally responsible person will expose the easy condemnations of people to

Hell made by ignorant, and sometimes ostensibly religious people and show them to be faulty, parochial and in clear contradiction of the Qur'ān and prophetic teachings.

4.9 THE LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE

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In Islam, there is a minimum of ten conditions that must be fulfilled for anyone to be deemed legally responsible. If these conditions are fulfilled and yet the person is sinful and an unbeliever, the ultimate judgement will be by God, since we may judge an individual by the outward. Ultimately, judgement and salvation of specific individuals is known to God not to bigots who think black and white, neither knowing the subtleties and the context nor what the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition actually state.

The first condition for anyone to be deemed as legally responsible, that is, being addressed to by the commands of the Qur'ān and responsible to God, is that the person must have a sound intellect as opposed to being mentally insane or mentally ill, nor having any such fault of the mind which renders the person unable to rationalise belief and what is being stated in the Qur'ān or prophetic tradition. This, in effect, would mean that all people born with mental impairment, madness or any inability of the mental faculties to comprehend what is being demanded by God will have salvation and not suffer any form of punishment. In Islamic law [*sharīʿa*], the mentally insane are exempt from punishments that are meted out to the sane for certain crimes, but this also relates to salvation in the Hereafter.

The question that arises here is what the opinion of the *Kalām* theologians would be regarding a person who was

initially sane but who accrued misdeeds or became insane later. The response would involve taking into consideration the other nine conditions to qualify a person to be legally responsible, and supposing those requirements were met, the insane individual would be judged according to those misdeeds acquired during his time of sanity given that he had not made amends prior to insanity.

The absence of an intoxicated mind, whether through alcohol or narcotics, is another essential facet for a person to be deemed sane. A situation might occur where someone who has never heard of Islam or the Qur'ān, while drunk, hears about the Qur'ān but on getting sober cannot recall a thing about it. If that person never hears anything more about Islam again in his life, then he will not face eternal punishment as the message of Islam did not reach him while he was sober or thinking clearly.

The second condition for an individual to be considered legally responsible is to have reached the age of maturity, which in Islamic law and theology is the age of puberty. Anyone who reaches puberty with sane mental faculties in Islamic law is deemed an adult. This means that children who die before maturity do not face perdition and in fact stay in eternal bliss. So, what does it mean if we talk about a Christian child, or a Hindu child, or a Buddhist child? The response is very simple in that as these children were born to parents who hold those respective beliefs it does not in any way entail those children are to be condemned to the fate of their parents (if they die upon their beliefs).

A question that arises here is whether people born into a Muslim family have an unfair advantage in terms of guidance and salvation over children born into families of other faiths or no faiths. The answer is no because individual salvation is

dependent on a number of factors and is not just an outward profession of Islam. The factors taken into consideration are the ten conditions that we are currently discussing along with the scope of freewill and choice. A Muslim might outwardly profess Islam but inwardly disbelieve. This person will not attain salvation according to Islamic doctrine and is deemed a hypocrite [*munāfiq*]. In some instances, these may be religious fanatics who have no in-depth understanding of what beliefs actually are. They could be expressing an interpretation of Islam to distort it purposefully, or even supressing their own doubts through a fanaticism rooted in ignorance. By the same token, someone born to non-Muslim parents and never hearing about Islam works in his favour, so much so that he is forgiven.

The third condition for someone to be deemed legally responsible is that the correct message must reach them for them to be able to accept it as a correct doctrine. If a distorted form of Islam reaches them, they are only deemed legally responsible if they had access to correct information and interpretation.

This condition answers the question regarding human societies who never heard of the true message in earlier times, or even today. Salvation in ancient times, prior to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, was dependent on the acceptance of the message of previous prophets and messengers, like Moses ﷺ, and even then, their message was limited to their own nation. But if someone had never heard their message or the message was not addressed to them, then such people would be exempt from any damnation. This would mean that some tribes in the Amazon, certain native groups or peasants during the Middle Ages and countless other human groups will have salvation since the message of previous prophets or the message of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ did not reach them, or if it did,

reached them in a distorted way, for example like a peasant in Europe during the Crusades. The Qur'ān assures us that messengers were sent to all nations in ancient times but as humans with limited knowledge we do not know whether the message of those messengers reached every individual. For this reason, ultimate knowledge of individual salvation is left to God since He does not act on assumption but knows through His divine attribute of omniscience.

In the modern age, however, there is more access to knowledge even though the facts may be distorted, so every individual who hears of Islam, taking into account the other conditions, is legally responsible to learn the facts if they have access to correct information or know a person willing to explain. An outright refusal to hear the truth despite being able to do so would render the person culpable.

Consider the following scenario:

> JOHN: Your religion is violent because it has the concept of *Jihād* which is terrorism.
>
> ZAYD: Yes, it does have *Jihād* but to equate *Jihād* with terrorism is wrong because what it actually is...
>
> JOHN (INTERRUPTING): I am sorry, I do not want to hear what you have to say as it is old rubbish and I do not want to hear it.
>
> ZAYD: But let me give you a small book on the subject or at least listen to a lecture on it.
>
> JOHN: I have already made up my mind and do not want to know.

Let us suppose that John did listen and was given a correct exposition of what *Jihād* actually is and all his doubts were addressed, yet he insisted on his presuppositions through disdain, bigotry and arrogance, then in such a case John would

be legally obligated to accept the responsibility.

The fourth condition for someone to be deemed legally responsible would be of sound senses. If the loss of any sense impairs their understanding of what is being conveyed, they are not deemed liable for not adopting the true message. This would include, for instance, someone born deaf and blind, or the deaf who speak in sign language but who cannot really understand the deep import and nuances of those words. This condition will of course vary in accordance with the type of sense disability.

The fifth condition for a person to be deemed legally responsible is the ability to investigate the truth. If this does not exist due to a lack of comprehension and mental inability to do so, or physical constraints, like being a prisoner, for example, then the person will not be legally responsible other than according to his ability.

The sixth condition is that a person is not in a coercive situation which threatens life or limb. This particular condition is more peculiar to acts which otherwise would be deemed sinful. An example of this would be eating pork to stay alive where no other food is available or having a swig of alcohol to wash down a morsel that is choking a person to death—it being the nearest available drink. In such scenarios, a person would not be deemed legally responsible.

The seventh condition for someone to be deemed legally responsible is the absence of negligence. Negligence here entails being busy to the point that the mind pays no attention to the obligation, as opposed to a wilful abandonment of the obligation.

The eighth condition is absence through deep sleep. Once the person awakes, he shall be deemed legally responsible.

The ninth condition is absence through forgetfulness. Once the memory returns, he shall be deemed legally responsible.

The tenth condition is the absence of coercion, as being forced to do something against freewill is not deemed a sin. The Qur'ān states, ﴾*There is no compulsion in religion*﴿ [Qur'ān 2:256]. This verse of the Qur'ān actually means that if someone adopts a faith through compulsion they will not actually believe from the heart and will, therefore, not attain salvation by compulsion. Subsequently, forced conversions are prohibited in Islam, with *Jihād* never decreed specifically to spread Islam but rather to protect territories under Muslim governance.

After these ten conditions are met, that person is deemed legally responsible under Islamic law and theology and considered sinful if they contravene the commands of God. This would mean that freewill to a limited scope is subject to scrutiny of God's law and does not cover every aspect of human life. This accounts for what God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*God does not burden a soul more than it can bear*﴿ [Qur'ān 2:286].

4.10 UNBELIEVERS

If someone does not believe in Islam and yet his judgement is left ultimately to God, why do Muslims refer to such unbelievers as a *Kāfir*? Why does the Qur'ān condemn unbelievers to Hell?

The term *Kāfir* means 'to cover', as in the night covering everything in darkness or the farmer covering the seeds he plants with soil. The term *Kāfir* also means 'to reject', as in rejecting Islam and in such a way Muslims are *Kāfir* from what the unbelievers say since Muslims reject their beliefs.

The *Kāfir* also covers the truth. The *Kāfir* mentioned in the Qur'ān is the person who fulfils all the ten conditions for being legally obligated and yet after fulfilling those conditions rejects the truth and thus is condemned for doing so.

However, there are groups or individuals who may not fulfil all the conditions but are still referred to as *Kāfir* in the legal sense, although this does not occasion individual damnation. A simplification of this would be that of a Muslim travelling through the Amazon and coming across a tribe that he cannot communicate with. This tribe has never met people from modern cities and will unlikely fulfil the ten conditions of being legally obligated, yet still the term *Kāfir* is applied to them as they are not Muslims with the ultimate judgement of this tribe left to God who does not punish people whom the message has not reached. The Muslim will deal with this tribe in terms of worldly transactions and dealings as *Kāfir* people, as he cannot eat their slaughtered meat, marry into them, plus a few other communal interactions. However, their ultimate salvation is left to God and if one of them dies, a Muslim cannot pray the funeral over them or make a supplication for them. Some jurists counsel that the term *Kāfir* should be avoided when offending non-believers.

These are all legal rulings and ramifications, but the ultimate judgement is with God. In the Qur'ān, there are groups of unbelievers that have been warned regarding eternal punishment. Those are unbelievers who nevertheless fulfil the ten conditions mentioned above.

4.11 THE OUTWARD MUSLIM & THE OUTWARD *KĀFIR*

Zayd is born in a Muslim family to Muslim parents. He

grows up as a nominal Muslim and follows his religion but with blind conformity and no real conviction. One day, Zayd comes across some atheist arguments at school and becomes convinced that Islam is untrue and that there is no God. Not wanting to upset his family, Zayd decides to conceal his atheism. During the month of Ramaḍān, he fasts when at home but when with his friends he will indulge in a Ḥarām meal, even alcohol and drugs and other vices prohibited in Islam. His family remains unaware of his inward state of atheism and continues to treat him as a Muslim. He may even marry a Muslim woman who thinks Zayd is a Muslim and have children and grandchildren. When Zayd dies, the Imām of the mosque performs his funeral prayer and people supplicate for him thinking he has died a true Muslim. Yet, with God, he is a *Kāfir* in the true sense of the word.

Tom, on the other hand, is born in a non-Muslim family. Tom grows up sceptical about God. Tom spends all his life as a non-Muslim until one day he researches Islam because of a terrorist attack which has raised his interest in this religion he has little knowledge of. During his research he is convinced of the truthfulness of Islam and believes in it from his heart. However, Tom has never met a Muslim and never comes across one, and he never expresses his beliefs to anyone as the need never arises. Then Tom dies. No Imām prays his funeral and no supplications are made for him. Any Muslim hearing of Tom's death or reading his obituary would think that a *Kāfir* had died and would not be permitted by Islamic law to supplicate or pray for someone *Kāfir*. Yet, Tom was not a *Kāfir* but a true Muslim and a believer and will have salvation.

Freewill in a person is what exists within every human being and experienced by every human being on a daily basis. While you read this book, you exercise your freewill, yet to

what extent do external factors like society, social pressures and others determine freewill? The response would be that these factors can inspire human freewill but do not take away human choice.

A person born to a mother who smokes crack cocaine and is then raised within an abusive environment and society will be affected in many ways by his surroundings; however, those social pressures do not remove the freewill of that person even if he is influenced by many negative factors. If you study the ten parameters of a legally responsible individual and apply them on a person with such a social background—of psychological and spiritual suffering—it will become apparent that God has not tasked him with more than he can bear, as all the factors that affect a person in their life are taken into account by God. This is in reference to the religious obligations and judgement in the Hereafter, not in reference to personal suffering and psychological issues on earth. It must also be taken into account that such a person is not punished for actions influenced by their environment to the degree that it affects their freewill. Additionally, the person is rewarded for any suffering in the Hereafter.

This remaining human freewill, which remains despite society and other pressures, is what is responsible for belief and disbelief, good deeds and bad deeds. If the freewill of a person is taken away totally either through abuse, or thought reform, and psychological totalism, then such a person is not liable on the Day of Judgement to the same degree as a person who has their freewill and choice functioning. This, of course, varies according to the level of spiritual and psychological abuse which may paralyse the freedom of the will—which can be determined by God alone. This is precisely what is meant by God not tasking a soul more than what it can bear.

4.12 DIVINE WILL & HUMAN FREEWILL

A person can never determine where they are born, where they die nor how tall they will be, even so, many things have been placed under the minimal authority of the human freewill. This minimal choice we have in various matters of human responsibility is what is being addressed in the Qurʾān by God. Wherever a person has no choice, he is not liable to punishment or retribution from God. It is only within the realm of freedom of choice—the freewill—that the human being is being asked to acquire good deeds and/or avoid bad deeds.

God's knowing what we do, earn or acquire with our freewill does not entail that He has coerced us into those actions when we exercise our freewill. The divine knowledge of how things will be is referred to as *qaḍā* in the *Kalām* theology, and the creation of such things is referred to as *qadar*.

God knows that Tom will eat five thousand loaves of bread throughout his life and decreed it by creating Tom and the five thousand specific loaves for Tom to eat through the various periods of his life, but does this decree and foreordained knowledge of God negate Tom's freewill to earn and acquire good and bad deeds? The answer is no.

In the same way that God has created Tom and the world around him, God has created within Tom a freewill which is the choice of acquisition. This choice of acquisition of good or bad within a very limited period of life and a limited number of choices is what Tom is responsible for.

This is the meaning of the Qurʾānic verse, ﴾*Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they all declined to bear it, being fearful of*

it. But humanity assumed it, for they are truly wrongful to themselves and ignorant of the consequences﴿ [Qur'ān 33:72]. The trust referred to in the Qur'ān concerns the intellect and freewill, both of which are prerequisite to a true faith, since there is no faith without intellectual pursuit and the use of human freewill.

Clearly, there is a determinism in many factors, such as where a person is born and into what family and in which country, but ultimately his human responsibility lies in his own limited intellect and freewill which he has, and for as long as he has, as a trust from God which he must uphold. A human being's freedom lies in his choice to do good or bad. When he carries out his choice it is God who has created his ability of doing so and the means by which that action is carried out.

In summary, those things which are out of our control are referred to as the will of God because He creates them. This includes other humans exercising their freewill and their actions. Our own personal actions are referred to as the will of God because He has willed for us to have a freewill.

Before Arthur Schopenhauer wrote, "Der Mensch kann zwar tun, was er will, aber er kann nicht wollen, was er will"[43]—which translates from the German as, "Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills"—the Qur'ān had already declared, *"But you will not unless God wills; surely God is ever All-knowing, All-wise"* [Qur'ān 76:30]. The negation of will from man is the negation of independent creating, while the affirmation of the will of God for man is the freewill, relatively limited as it is, that creates within man that by which he undertakes his responsibility and on which, alongside the intellect, he will be questioned in the afterlife.

It may be said that the will is an inbuilt ability like the ability to speak, which the person utilises in the same way he uses his ability to speak.

The will could also be described through the connection between the whole of the created will with the specific option of doing or abandoning something, that emanates from the person by choice. Although the will as a whole is created by God, the specific individual option of doing or abandoning something is not. Rather, it is a mode, not an external existent but something that is subjective, such as when we describe an action as obedient or disobedient, indeed similar to those states or modes of things that are between existence and non-existence; an intermediate mode of existence between being and non-being.

Does the ability of the individual to make a resolve and acquire good or bad deeds undermine the power of God? Does it mean that the human is creating his own actions? We would respond by saying that God creates everything while the human being earns or acquires. This allows a person to turn their freewill and use the limited powers created by God towards carrying out actions in acquisition, yet at the same time acknowledging that the action brought about thereafter is the creation of God.

That power and freewill placed within us is also a creation of God. As such, its reality is that it is an accidental that God has bestowed on the human through which we make our choices, and yet it is the underlying cause or, one could say, it is the condition for the carrying out of any action.

Schopenhauer's description of the will as a noumenal property was definitely referring to a pre-Kantian definition as Schopenhauer had criticised Kant's use of the word noumenal. What Schopenhauer meant by noumenal was reality

itself, independent of our sense perceptions; a single undifferentiated entity that we can learn about. He called this entity the Will. Much earlier than Schopenhauer, al-Kirmānī stated, "The servant has a choice in his actions, but has no choice in his choice."

Lastly, the ability of the will is an attribute that God creates at the time when a person makes a resolve to carry out an action once the means and instruments of that intended action are available and sound. If the person intends to carry out good, God will create the ability to do good, while if the person intends to do bad, God will create the ability to do bad. By making the wrong choice, the human being is thus responsible for any evil actions he may carry out, thereby wasting the freewill God has given him. It is important to note at this point that the endowment of freewill is from God, yet what that person does with that freewill is his own doing. If he chooses to do wrong, the pleasure of God is not in that choice. Therefore, there is a distinction between the will of God and His pleasure over the action taken by His servants.

Philosophers have been debating these issues from Hellenistic times, pre-dating the Stoics, leaving some philosophers to lament the lack of progression made. This conundrum is known as 'the problem of freewill' and there are as many positions on it as there are philosophical schools. Western philosophers would likely describe the *Kalām* position as compatibilism or soft determinism.

4.13 THE MEANING OF 'GOD WILLING'

The statement 'God willing' is not a negation of the freewill of a human being as commonly thought. The will of God

is a reference to the creation of the means by which things are carried out and does not negate the freewill of humans. It reflects the recognition by the one who utters it that God creates the means by which all actions are carried out, once the human resolve to carry out a particular action has been made.

If Tom resolves to drive to Cornwall and said, 'God willing I am going to drive to Cornwall', the will of God means that God creates for Tom the instruments by which he can reach Cornwall, starting from his means of transport and its working parts, the roads that lead to Cornwall, as well as his safety. The will of God does not negate the freewill of Tom to make that choice of wanting to travel to Cornwall.

4.14 THE MEANING OF 'GOD GUIDES WHOM HE WILLS & MISGUIDES WHOM HE WILLS'

There are a few verses in the Qur'ān that are often quoted to give the impression that human choice is rendered impossible because they say that God guides or misguides whomever He wills; leaving apparently the human no choice. For instance, it is stated in the Qur'ān, ﴾*Surely you do not guide whomever you love, but Allah guides whomever He decides, and He knows best the ones (who are) rightly-guided*﴿ [Qur'ān 28:56]. The meaning of this, of course, is that once a person makes a choice of accepting guidance then God increases him in guidance, and if the person makes the choice of misguidance then God increases him in misguidance. Therefore, the will of God in guiding or misguiding someone is to augment the human who chooses guidance in his guidance and to increase the misguidance of anyone who chooses misguidance, while the initial choice remained that of the person albeit presuming

that the conditions of a legally responsible person had been fulfilled.

This does not amount to a negation of the free human choice to believe or to disbelieve but rather that the will of God is to guide or misguide whom He wills, and that that will is in accordance with the choice of the individual. This is exemplified by the verse of the Qur'ān which says, ﴾*I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the Earth without right; and if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it. And if they see the way of consciousness, they will not adopt it as a way; but if they see the way of error, they will adopt it as a way. That is because they have denied Our signs and they were heedless of them*﴿ [Qur'ān 7:146]. A person chooses not to listen or understand the truth, and purposefully chooses misguidance, then such a person due to his choice is further misguided and the means of misguidance are compounded by his choice and arrogance.

4.15 PROPHETIC REPORTS ON FREEWILL

As with Qur'ānic sources, certain prophetic reports are commonly thought to negate human freewill and these will be examined below:

First Report

ʿAbd-Allāh b. Masʿūd reported that the Messenger of Allah, who is the most truthful and his being truthful is a fact, said:

> "Verily, your creation is in the following manner. The constituents of one of you are collected for forty days in his

> mother's womb in the form of blood, after which it becomes a clot of blood in another period of forty days. Then it becomes a lump of flesh and forty days later Allah sends His angel to it with instructions concerning four things, so the angel writes down his livelihood, his death, his deeds, his fortune and misfortune. By Him, besides Whom there is no god, that one amongst you acts like the people deserving Paradise until between him and Paradise there remains but the distance of a cubit, when suddenly the writing of destiny overcomes him and he begins to act like the denizens of Hell and thus enters Hell. While another one acts in the way of the denizens of Hell, until there remains between him and Hell a distance of a cubit that the writing of destiny overcomes him and then he begins to act like the people of Paradise and enters Paradise."[44]

The wording that gives the outward meaning of the removal of freewill is 'that one amongst you acts like the people deserving Paradise until between him and Paradise there remains but the distance of a cubit, when suddenly the writing of destiny overcomes him and he begins to act like the denizens of Hell and thus enters Hell.'

The ostensible meaning of this report is that a person does the actions of the people of Paradise but because the writing of destiny overwhelms him, he ends up doing the actions of the people of Hell and subsequently enters Hell. This would mean that people have no freewill and are compelled by God to do actions which fulfil a destiny in which they have no choice.

This would be correct if a person went according to this wording of the narration, but if you add the wording of an additional variant of the narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* you also find the wording: 'In that which is apparent'. This would render the narration to read, 'That one amongst you acts like

the people deserving Paradise in that which is apparent until between him and Paradise there remains but the distance of a cubit, when suddenly the writing of destiny overcomes him and he begins to act like the denizens of Hell and thus enters Hell.'

So, what is the exact meaning of the narration? The report alludes to the outwardly pious person who outwardly does actions that have the appearance of the actions of the people of Paradise, but inwardly this person is corrupt, arrogant and a hypocrite. Therefore, toward the end of his life God removes his façade and the person will end up revealing his hypocrisy. On the other side of the spectrum is the man who is a sinner and outwardly disobedient to God, yet inwardly he believes in God and he has no arrogance, his sins only a result of weakness or desires. Such a person will be given the enablement of obeying God toward the end of his life and God will reveal his inner goodness despite his outward shortcomings.

Second Report

ᶜAlī ﷺ reported:

> We were in a funeral in the graveyard of *Gharqad* when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to us and we sat around him. He had a stick with him. He lowered his head and began to scratch the earth with his stick, and then said, "There is not one amongst you whom a seat in Paradise or Hell has not been allotted, and about whom it has not been written down whether he would be an evil person or a blessed person."
>
> A person said, "O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, should we not then depend upon our destiny and abandon our deeds?"

> Thereupon he ﷺ said, "Acts of everyone will be facilitated in that which has been created for him, so that whoever belongs to the company of the blessed will have good works made easier for him, and whoever belongs to the unfortunate ones will have evil acts made easier for him."
>
> He then recited this verse (from the Qur'ān): ﴾*Then, who gives to the needy and guards against evil and accepts the excellent We shall make easy for him the easy end and who is miserly and considers himself above need, We shall make easy for him the difficult end*﴿ [Qur'ān 92:5-10].[45]

The seats that have already been designated for people in Hell or Paradise are in accordance with the divine knowledge of God as to what actions people will do. In another report, it is stated that seats have been created for every human in both Hell and Paradise, and depending on the choice of the person to acknowledge his servitude to God, the person will enter either Hell or Paradise by the choices he made on earth after the fulfilment of the prerequisites of a legally responsible person. The meaning of the phrase 'Acts of everyone will be facilitated in, that which has been created for him so that whoever belongs to the company of the blessed will have good works made easier for him and whoever belongs to the unfortunate ones will have evil acts made easier for him' is that God knows which people will choose to do good and recognise their servitude to God and those who will not do good and not recognise their servitude, and subsequently the choices that people make are made easier for them. With the person who chooses the way of misguidance, his way to evil is facilitated because of his evil motives and indecent exercise of freewill.

4.16 SIN & FREEWILL

Once a person is deemed legally responsible for actions and recognises his servitude to God, he is liable to reward and punishment for obedience or disobedience respectively, while a person who is legally responsible and who does not acknowledge his servitude to God is deemed an unbeliever and faces eternal damnation. These are problematic for atheism on various counts. If, however, we keep in mind the conditions by which someone is deemed legally responsible it becomes clear that a specific segment of society is being addressed with the onus of acknowledging their servitude to their creator on them, and secondly the avoidance of what He has prohibited and compliance with what He has commanded.

A point-blank refusal to believe in God renders a person an unbeliever, while a falling short of God's commands makes one a sinner. Both of these are problematic as is claimed by the atheist in that these concepts lead to a mental and spiritual slavery causing anxiety and other psychological issues. The question would be whether acknowledging such servitude and following God's divine commands really leads to anxiety or whether, by contrast, it is ignorance of what Islam actually teaches that leads to it. The correct answer would be the latter; that ignorance leads to that.

The sins of a person only relate to that which falls under the freewill and not that which is caused by duress. Actions which are carried out through duress are forgiven, like disbelief due to a forced conversion, when the Qur'ān clearly says, ﴾*Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief... except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith. But those who open their breasts to unbelief, upon them is wrath from Allah, and for them is a great punishment*﴿ [Qur'ān 16:106].

Again, as in the case of someone facing hunger pangs with no availability of food other than eating pig meat or other prohibited things to stay alive, the Qur'ān says, ﴾*Surely He has prohibited for you only carrion (i.e. dead meat) and blood and the flesh of swine, and whatever has been acclaimed to other than Allah. So, whoever is constrained, neither being inequitable nor aggressive, then no sin will be upon him; surely Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful*﴿ [Qur'ān 2:173].

Further reasons for a sinner not to despair lie in God's forgiveness of all sins as long as the person repents before dying and makes amends. Even in the worst scenario, if a sinner dies without repenting there are many sinners who go unpunished—the sole exception being for unbelief, because unbelief is built on arrogance while the believing sinner acknowledges his servitude to his creator and does not reject his innate neediness to the divine creator. This is why the Qur'ān says, ﴾*Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (by sinning), do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Verily, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful*﴿ [Qur'ān 38:53].

But even if a sinner does not repent from certain sins, God still forgives him or removes the sins on account of the good deeds that person does. God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*Whoever comes with a good deed will be rewarded tenfold. But whoever comes with a bad deed will be punished for only one. None will be wronged*﴿ [Qur'ān 6:160]. In one Ḥadīth it is stated that if a person sins the angels wait six worldly hours before recording it in order to give the sinner time to repent. Even if he does not repent, the Qur'ān tells us that good deeds erase bad deeds, and one bad action is counted as one while a good action is counted as ten. This would mean that if a bad deed is erased by a good deed, there is still the remainder of nine good counts, one portion only having erased the bad

deed. It is stated too in the Qur'ān that if a person repents in worldly life and makes amends, his bad actions are changed into good, ﴾*As for those who repent, believe, and do good deeds, they are the ones whose evil deeds Allah will change into good deeds. For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful*﴿ [Qur'ān 25:70].

The severity of punishment for some sins is due to the harm they cause to others or infringing the rights of humans and animals. ﴾*And whatever strikes you of disaster—it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much*﴿ [Qur'ān 42:30]. Should one person be a sinner and another outwardly pious, God will know the inner reality and their motives, as well as the soundness of heart. The following stories told by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ illustrates this reality:

The Story of the Prostitute and the Dog

Abū Hurayra ؓ reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, "A prostitute had once been forgiven. She passed by a dog panting near a well. Thirst had nearly killed him, so she took off her sock, tied it to her veil, and drew up some water. Allah forgave her for that."[46]

The Story of the Woman and the Cat

The Prophet ﷺ also gave the parable of a woman and a cat. The Prophet ﷺ said, "A woman entered the (Hell) Fire because of a cat which she had tied up, giving it neither food nor setting it free to eat from the creatures of the earth."[47]

The Story of the Ṣūfī Sage and the Mongol Chief

It is related that when the Mongols sacked Baghdad they

interrogated many of its influential citizens. One of the people they interrogated was a Ṣūfī sage. The Mongol chief attempted to deride him saying, "The hair of your beard is equal to the fur of my dog."

The sage paused before responding, "You are correct. If I do not obey my master the way your dog obeys you then the hair of my beard is worthless and of less value than the fur on your dog."

The Mongol chief dumbstruck by the response released the man.

4.17 THE DANGER OF RELIGIOUS ARROGANCE

It happens that a person who performs an outward action of piety begins to think himself superior to others whom he deems sinners. Such a person has not fulfilled the duty of servitude to God even though he may think he has, eventually falling victim to this inner sin of arrogance. Conversely, a sinner may attain a high rank with God because he deems himself low and is ashamed of his sins. Such a person is beloved by God, who will eventually enable him to turn back to Him offering him different means of support.

This is why the Ṣūfī aphorisms mention: 'A sin that leads to humility is better than a virtue that leads to arrogance and hubris.' No one can say with certainty that an atheist alive today is surely going to Hell since through an innate sincerity he may be led to the straight path before he dies, recognising his servitude to God. On the other hand, an individual who outwardly believes, yet is inwardly arrogant, believing in himself and not God—leading to a narcissism noticeable, for example, in cult leaders. These at the time of death, mistaken-

ly believe in themselves and their self-servitude. It is this kind of pseudo religiosity that people often mistake for theism and typically involve group dynamics whereby the followers, at the behest of the leader, attribute divine-like properties to the leader.

4.18 WHY DOES GOD NEED OUR WORSHIP?

Some atheists have framed this same objection differently by saying that God is a cosmic dictator or a heavenly Saddam Hussein. This is based on the conception that God must deal with people like the leader of a country should serve the people who elected him. If He does not, then He is a dictator and has ill served the people He governs. The analogy of God's justice to the leader of a nation or commonwealth is hopelessly flawed. How can one compare a human leader with the One who created humanity and established the heavens and the earth? The injustice witnessed in the world relates to the unjust people who violate the rights of others. Unjust because, for example, the people, their property and their rights, dignity and honour do not belong to a dictator. This is not the case with God since everything belongs to Him and He does as He wills. The fact that God can do what He wants is why some atheists despise the very concept of God and liken Him to a cosmic dictator, falling into the evident blunder of comparing a human dictator with the Creator of everything who does what He wants with His creation.

Let us suppose God chose not to punish anyone but rather place us in eternal bliss only after taking away our freewill and rationality, or let us suppose God decided to punish everyone without reason. In either of these imagined scenarios how would that disprove God and how could anyone object

to God's logic, if they themselves had any access to logic in those scenarios? Such an objection would be impossible as the very meaning of human justice would be absent since what we take as justice or injustice in this world is shown in the imperfections, difficulties and suffering which God has created for us, and not least in the gift of intellect and freewill.

Justice means giving everyone their due right, while injustice, on the other hand, is taking away that right, something we only learn about through our interaction with fellow human beings and with other sentient creatures. Preserving and ensuring that those rights are not violated is what we learn from this realm. This can never be applicable to God, as God created both humans and their freewill, and He is the One who obligated us to uphold the rights of one another. Thus, for created beings to demand that God treat them like a benevolent ruler is a fallacy as God does what He wants. God has tasked His servants on earth with only that which they can bear, not overburdening them with what they cannot do, judging them on their actions of choice from their intellect and freewill, as well as all the other conditions of a legally responsible person. God guides anyone who is sincere in the heart and wants guidance, and He misguides the one who is arrogant and rebellious.

Justice when ascribed to God is whatever He wills to do and not what humans or anyone else thinks He should do. As the values of justice as we understand them are the human standards of how we deal with one another, yet God transcends these conventions.

God by definition could if He wanted place all His worshippers in Hell and all those who disobey Him in Paradise, and He could punish with or without account. However, He will not do this nor be unjust in the least as He

is not judged Himself, and cannot be measured by human standards. Accepting this fact is the essence of faith and the meaning of servitude to God. This is why Islam means submission and submitting to the divine will of God. While the refusal to acknowledge this reality is termed *kufr*, which is concealing the reality of our innate neediness of the divine and our need to submit to Him. The refusal to accept God's lordship and supreme sovereignty is rooted in the mistake of equating God, His actions and attributes, with human nature, deeming Him to be like a president or a worldly king dealing with their subjects. This is the inherent flaw of unbelief.

A believer acknowledges his inherent neediness to his creator and recognises that the creator in whatever He does is just and right and is not judged by our standards. Yet, God only punishes those who have full cognizance of what they are doing, have sound intellect, have reached maturity and know that those actions are disapproved. Even after that, many sins and sometimes all sins are forgiven with the sole exception of unbelief. This reality of servitude and the innate need we have of God reveals itself at our weakest points. This is why humans tend to exclaim 'O God!' during turbulence on an aeroplane, or when waves thump the side of a boat at sea and other similar situations.

God does not need our worship. He created us, thereby giving us the greatest of gifts—our own existence and life. A man indeed could spend his entire life without knowing about God or hearing his message and still enter eternal bliss in the afterlife, simply because God does not punish a person who has not heard the divine message. Yet those who have been gifted intellect, rational thought, ability and the time to investigate the message that reaches them, maturity, cognizance and the right societal factors like not having their freewill undermined by mental abuse and totalitarianism,

such are those expected to submit and acknowledge their innate servitude to God.

This is the meaning of what God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*I created the Jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me*﴿ [Qur'ān 51:56]. Some have translated the word 'worship' as 'service', giving the impression to some that the meaning of this is hard acts of worship, rituals and rites. The correct meaning, however, is that man has been created to know God. This is why Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ—the cousin of the Prophet ﷺ— said that 'worship' means 'to know Him.' Knowing God means to recognise Him with the mind and heart by observing His signs. Attaining the means of recognising Him is through worship. Because worship is a constant means of recognising God, that is referred to in the verse.

Is worship merely a collection of rituals and rites which non-conformists dread, or does it consist of other things? It should be clearer at this point that worship consists of thinking and science and not just the rites of worship. God states in the Qur'ān, ﴾*Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the Earth, and the alternation of the day and night, there are signs for people of reason. They are those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the Earth and pray, 'Our Lord! You have not created all of this without purpose. Glory be to You! Protect us from the torment of the Fire. Our Lord! Indeed, those You commit to the Fire will be completely disgraced! And the wrongdoers will have no helpers'*﴿ [Qur'ān 3:190-192]. Remembering itself is an act of worship. The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of God's servants are those who observe the sun, crescent moons and the stars, as a way of remembering God."[48]

In summary, after having been created and given the gifts of life, intellect and freewill, the only thing demanded of the human being is to recognise and know his divine creator. Those for whom this message reaches are thereby informed as to how to expand their intellectual and spiritual knowing of that creator. Those who do not receive the message or who do not meet the conditions of being legally responsible are exempt from this obligation, even though some of them may know God solely through their intellects without recourse to divine revelation. God says, ﴾*And whoever strives only strives for himself. Indeed, God is free from need of the worlds*﴿ [Qur'ān 29:6].

4.19 THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

Why did God create us at all if He knew that some of us would go to Hell? Does this not contradict His being the Most Merciful and Utterly Good, as the premise of the above syllogism suggests; that He is morally perfect? The answer to this question given the previous elaboration would simply be that God is the doer of what He wills. This objection however has an additional caveat in that God in creating people knows many will disobey Him and this would seem to contradict the attribute of being the Most Merciful. Why would the divine action of God create beings who will ultimately disobey Him through their own freewill (including the likes of Satan)? Would not this be the same as someone saying they have fidelity to their spouse and then commit adultery while still claiming fidelity?

The mistake this objector makes is not realising that the manifestation of the names of God in Islam relates to the attribute of divine will. When God wills, He gives life and

when He wills He takes life, and when He wills He gives sustenance and when He wills he withholds the sustenance, all in accordance with His divine will and divine knowledge and wisdom. God has the names the Withholder [*al-Qābiḍ*] and the Sustainer [*al-Razzāq*], names manifested in accordance with His divine will without contradiction, unlike fidelity and adultery which are not manifestations of two different actions that are mutually exclusive but the manifestation of two contradictory meanings. A man who is married cannot have fidelity while being an adulterer, as fidelity implies the absence of adultery. Yet a person can be generous to whomever he wants and stingy with whomever he wants, and there will be no contradiction between the two here.

For God to manifest His Most Merciful nature to a specific creation is His will, and for Him to manifest His name as the Punisher, the One who harms, to anyone of His creation is also His divine will. For a human to judge God on human standards reflects a deep flaw in thinking as it is totally incommensurable to compare the All-Knowing with those who have partial contingent and limited knowledge, especially given that the One has no need of His creation while creatures need Him and require one another for various motives.

Who and what is good and utterly good is not determined by the human when it relates to the divine, and the same applies to moral perfection, as human standards of morality and goodness vary amongst themselves and change from society to society and over time. The goodness and badness of anything is not determined by the human mind alone as will be discussed below.

Only those who disbelieve after misusing their freewill and intellect will God punish, having been given these gifts,

along with the mental capability to investigate the revealed scripture and having access to those who may remove any intellectual obscurity. By saying God has wronged these people by giving them freewill and intellect after having given them life—supremely precious itself—also contradicts human logic. If a father leaves his sons an inheritance of millions divided equally between two sons, yet knowing that one son will spend wisely and the other son will waste the money, has the father wronged the sons by bequeathing them their inheritance? By God gifting someone with life, intellect and freewill, He has conferred a greater favour on that being than anything else, with all that God commands being that that person recognises and acknowledges his servitude to the divine which will also be rewarded on Earth and in the afterlife. The rewards on earth come in many forms—like the favours God confers upon us—one favour of God outweighing all of our good deeds.

4.20 THE MAN WHO WORSHIPPED FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS

The Angel Gabriel ﷺ related the following incident to the Prophet ﷺ about a man in the past who worshipped God continuously for five hundred years. He was granted shelter on top of a mountain surrounded by salty water. God, however, caused a stream of sweet water to flow through the mountain to that individual. The man would drink from this water and use it to make ritual ablution [*wuḍū'*]. God also raised a pomegranate tree from which the man would eat one fruit every day. One day, this man prayed to God, "O God, bring my death while I am in the state of prostration." God accepted his supplication.

Whenever Gabriel ﷺ came down to the earth, he found the man prostrating in worship. Gabriel ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgement, God will tell the angels to take this individual to Paradise through His mercy. However, this man will insist that he should enter Paradise through the good deeds that he has performed."

Then, Gabriel ﷺ said, "God will tell the angels to compare the man's good deeds with the blessings that were given to him in the world. It will be shown to him that five hundred years of his worship does not even equal the gift of sight from God. The angels will proceed to lead him towards Hell, at which point the man will plead, "O God, let me enter Paradise by Your mercy only." At that point, the following discussion will take place between God and that man.

God will ask, "O my servant, who created you?"

The worshipper will reply, "O God, you have created me."

God will say, "Were you created because of the good deeds you have done or because of My mercy?"

The worshipper will respond, "Because of Your mercy."

God will inquire, "Who granted you the ability to worship for five hundred years?"

The worshipper will affirm, "O Almighty! You have granted me that ability."

God will say, "Who placed you on the mountain surrounded by the ocean? Who caused a stream of sweet water to flow in between the salty water? Who caused a pomegranate tree to grow for you? Who granted you death while in prostration?"

The worshipper, with humility and shame, will state, "O Sustainer of the Worlds! You have done all of these."

Then God will say, "All these things happened through My mercy and you too will enter Paradise only through My mercy."[49]

The favour of life, freewill and the intellect is greater than non-existence. The one who has been given these favours is in a state of safety, with full cognizance and senses, maturity, imbued with the correct message, under no duress and with the ability to investigate, along with all the other conditions of legal responsibility. Then, and only then is such a person liable to punishment for not accepting his own innate servitude and the divine favours conferred upon him. Any refusal to acknowledge God after all of these favours indicates an underlying arrogance and that is why a person is punished.

If life, freewill and intellect were not so precious, then people would not deem human life so worthy as to require punishment for murder, and most would accept the morality of euthanasia or the abortion of a living foetus. Some atheists, while they may not accept other forms of murder, already deem euthanasia and abortion morally acceptable.

4.21 A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

This is an experiment in thinking for the one who makes the previous objection:

You are transported back in time via a time-machine to Austria. The date is 20TH of April and the year is 1889. You are taken to baby Hitler who has just been born and you are given the option of killing him to prevent all the dreadful evil he will commit in the future. You have full knowledge that this life will be the cause of World War II and the Holocaust, and innumerable other crimes against humanity.

You are presented with the choice of ending his life and preventing the subsequent freewill and intellect Hitler will develop in his adult life by which he will carry out his war crimes. What do you do? Do you allow him to live and carry out his choices in the full knowledge of what he will do, or do you kill him, depriving this one child of life and saving others from his evil in the foreseen future?

If you choose the option to take his life then you could never object when God takes away life, destroys, punishes, causes pestilence and disease, blindness, allows humans to carry out their crimes and innumerable other things. If you would kill the baby Hitler solely on the strength of your limited human knowledge, then it should be only too easy to imagine what God does and wills due to His divine wisdom and eternal knowledge.

The second option, that of allowing baby Hitler to live for the fact that he has not actually done anything at that given moment and is entitled to life, freewill and intellect—and despite knowing what he will do with his freewill—there is no way you could object to God creating humans with life, freewill, intellect and many other favours, knowing that they will misuse those favours and end up in Hell by choice.

God says, ❴*Be grateful to God. And whoever is grateful is grateful for himself. And whoever denies (His favour)—then indeed, Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy*❵ [Qur'ān 31:12].

4.22 WHY DOES GOD BURN THE UNBELIEVERS IN HELL FOR ETERNITY?

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This question intends to probe the logicality of eternal pun-

ishment. The three main contestants in this difficult scenario are Hell, evil (which includes suffering), and divine law (which in the case of Islam is *Sharīʿa*). The objection to be answered is why unbelievers should be punished for eternity and not momentarily, if they should be punished at all.

As already discussed, God could place all of humanity in Hell which would not make Him unjust; a sufficient answer from our point of view. But let us take this promise of punishment in its true context and alleviate any anxiety for the probing mind. All crimes are punishable by government laws and judgements are given in courts of law in accordance with the nature of the crime. If it is a minor offence, then the sentence is short and in some cases the offence may be dismissed or only a very light sentence given. In God's divine court the sins of a personal nature are often forgiven and sometimes lightly punished, or the warning of a punishment may just be communicated but there is also the promise of forgiveness. The most severe sins are those which relate to the rights of the creation of God, whether humans or animals, and the warning relating to these sins is severe to protect the rights of humans, animals, and the surrounding environment in general. Then there is the punishment for those who reject belief once all the necessary conditions of legal responsibility have been fulfilled.

The difference between this sin and the previous sins is that this sin is not one momentarily lived like the former sins. If a man disobeys God, surrendering to his desires and succumbs to drinking, that sin of drinking and subsequent intoxication is short lived and thus the punishment is not everlasting if he is punished at all. Similarly, the sins relating to the rights of others are short lived and a person can be punished with a punishment that lasts long enough to mete out justice, and sometimes punishments that relate to the rights of others are

re-compensation in the form of deeds. The sin of disbelief after the generous conditions of responsibility have been met is different because if the person were to live on earth forever, he would remain an unbeliever irrespective to whatever signs he witnessed. The eternal punishment is reserved for that group of people who, if they remained on Earth forever, would remain unbelievers forever and subsequently the punishment of the crime is forever.

Additionally, if after witnessing the Day of Judgement and Hell and everything else in the unseen realm and were returned to earth they would revert to unbelief. If anyone thought that such a group of people did not exist, then examine the statements of famous and notorious atheists who boast that if they did meet a creator in the afterlife, they would denounce him and refuse to change. It is because of this obstinacy to belief and the desire to reject it at any cost that the punishment continues forever.

The Qur'ān describes a discussion between the unbelievers where God is mentioned, ﴾*If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire and will say, 'Oh, would that we could be returned (to life on Earth) and not deny the signs of our Lord and be among the believers'*﴿ [Qur'ān 6:27]. This is what the unbelievers say when they see Hell but God goes on to say, ﴾*But what they concealed before has appeared to them. And even if they were returned, they would return to that which they were forbidden; and indeed, they are liars*﴿ [Qur'ān 6:28]. This is the reality of the unbeliever who is burned for eternity once he chooses not to believe in the unseen realm and is returned back to earth. He will remain an unbeliever. We are informed by God in the Qur'ān what they will admit, ﴾*They will say, 'Yes, a warner had come to us, but we denied and said, 'Allah has not sent down anything. You are not but in great error.'' And they will say, 'If only we*

had been listening or reasoning, we would not be among the companions of the Blaze'﴾ [Qur'ān 67:9-10].

4.23 THE PUNISHMENT IN HELL

Is not the unbearable punishment in Hell totally unnecessary? Such a misunderstanding is based on the idea that the human is punished in the next life with a body similar to the body he had on earth, when in reality the Qur'ān and the prophetic reports mention that human bodies will be totally different and accord with the dimensions of the realm of the afterlife. Any attempt to create an analogy with our earthly bodies is bound to be limited. If bodily dimensions and characteristics of the bodies in the hereafter are different, it implies too that they are meet for the punishment in accordance with the nature of the crime.

As punishments on earth are difficult but still endurable within the measure of the crime, so too are bodies in the afterlife. If a human body can stay in a prison cell in this life, desirable or not, so too can the body in the hereafter, which can stay in Hell for the crime committed. It is not something to enjoy any more than a life sentence for murder is on earth or for any other crimes.

Therefore, when reading about Hell, it should always be kept in mind that the realities and dimensions of those realms are different from what we are accustomed to on Earth and the punishment is proportionate to that realm. Conversely, the same is true regarding Paradise and its enjoyments.

4.24 EUTHYPHRO'S DILEMMA

Who determines what is good and bad? Often referred to as Euthyphro's Dilemma, this problem is mentioned in Plato's 'Dialogues' and relates to our discourse on the essence of goodness and badness and may well be the source of the debate raised by the Muʿtazilite sect to which the Sunnī *Kalām* traditionalists responded.

Socrates responds to Euthyphro on the nature of piety by asking his famous question, "Are the pious loved by the gods because they are pious, or they are pious because they are pious?" According to this problem, no normative term like 'good' or 'pious' can be defined since the rationalities differ unless it is said that they have no rational justification. However, if the approval or command is rationally justified then it is that rational justification that is the ultimate authority and not the god who commands or approves.

There are those things that can be deemed as good from their very essence without any resort to other considerations like their relative or subjective nature. When we conceive anything, like existence for example, we naturally think of its opposite, which in this case would be non-existence. In the case of good there will be its opposite, which is bad.

Thus, we move to how we determine both good and bad.

If goodness is innately good and does not require anyone to make it so then that would mean that goodness is emanating from its own nature without the creation of a maker who regulates it and makes it good. Rather, this would entail that innate good has an authority over the divine actions of God, His judgements and rulings, such values of goodness being the ultimate authority. This would also entail that no one has

authority over the nature of good because it emanates from its very own existence and has no recourse to a determiner, or anyone who modifies its values.

The other possibility would be that good is determined by God and that He gives it the nature of 'goodness' according to His divine knowledge, wisdom, mercy and whatever He wills. This would mean that values and goodness do not emanate on their own and nothing can be deemed good or bad by its nature, in other words, that which is deemed good, bad, or evil is not due to its essence but the result of various incidental or accidental considerations through its relation to other things, all of which God creates.

Muslims, of course, take the latter view in that it is God who determines what is good and bad. Human reasoning alone is insufficient in determining the goodness or badness of something. The actions we make and observe in others can be described as good, or its opposite, bad or corrupt, but that description is due to external factors and other considerations like social interactions that demand a specific way of interaction. Certain cultures, for instance, may deem a specific action bad while others deem it good. Driving up a one-way road is deemed bad in some places and deemed absolutely fine and good in other places. Sometimes a thing may be deemed as good because of the good effects it leaves behind, while at other times it may be deemed bad because of the bad effects it leaves behind. At times, something can be deemed as good when coupled with one thing and deemed bad when coupled with another on various counts. At other times, something is described as good because of the benefits it brings to others, like knowledge, and at other times deemed bad, like ignorance. Then again, another person can believe ignorance is bliss.

Lying is deemed a social ill because of the harm it brings, yet some people will deem it good when it is used to save a human life, for example, or considered acceptable in a unique situation. Likewise, things that are deemed good or bad vary according to social interaction and how specific benefits, cultures and habits are considered, not to mention the nature of the people in how they consider specific things themselves.

In like manner, some foods are deemed good and others bad according to custom and taste. Some people in the Far East eat dogs, rats, bats and a variety of other creatures considered horrendous to eat in other places. When the intellect judges such things as being good or bad, it does so under the influence of social factors or taste, and a variety of other influences. This is why people have disagreements on judgements pertaining to what is deemed good or bad.

So far, it can be agreed that humans differ regarding the good or bad nature of something for a variety of considerations but that if there is a divine reality, God, then He alone can determine for us what is to be good or bad, and yet at the same time there are many things that are deemed good or bad universally. Such universal good or bad it is claimed is not dependent on other factors, but rather stands independently with its good or bad nature, like the goodness of justice, the badness of oppression, or like the goodness of thanking the one who does you a favour, or saving someone from drowning. It is claimed after this that if God were wholly good and morally perfect then His divine actions and commands must be in accordance with that which is innately good, otherwise His divine perfection is undermined, an impossibility according to the nature of God.

This reasoning would lead one to think that God can only do that which is deemed as universally good and perfect in

compliance with His perfect nature, and that the mind is sufficient in determining what is universally good and bad, even though the latter is full of contradictions. For example, as cannibalism in some human tribes is deemed good, the intellect alone is insufficient in determining the badness of cannibalism as the tribe members would deem it good.

The Sunnī *Kalām* tradition responds to this by saying that the mind is not independent in determining absolute good and bad, and therefore is in need of guidance that informs which actions are rewardable and which actions are punishable in the afterlife. The personal convictions of the intellect in determining what is good or bad are insufficient in any ruling on God's judgements as things are not good or bad independently from God who created them. This is also because that which is described as 'good' or 'bad', when it was created could have taken either of those adjectives, showing that the essence of something is different from its adjective. As God creates things as good or bad, then those things are prone to change by the One who created them, and He is the one who determines their nature.

Thus, things are neither good nor bad due to their essence. Actions have no goodness or badness in themselves, they are just described as such through the accidentals associated with them.

Society as a whole and the parts that make up that whole is not dissimilar to an instrument composed of numerous functioning parts, the value of the whole is taken from these integrated components. The value of actions within society is known to God. Even if people formed a consensus and decided that a specific action was good, it would not make that action good. The wrong action can be deemed good, like eugenics, racism, ethnic cleansing or many other monstrosi-

ties. Recent history illustrates this; particularly the Holocaust in Hitler's Germany or the Bolshevik slaughter. Even actions that seem outwardly good in a universal sense can be deceiving; there are many lessons on how the human mind without God's guidance can misjudge a situation.

4.25 THE DROWNING MAN

A person is drowning in a river and calling for help. You observe that a second man jumping into the river to rescue the drowning person.

Ostensibly the man has performed a universally praiseworthy action. Such an action can however have many possibilities according to its inner realities. One scenario could be that the man saved the drowning person for no ulterior motive other than for the sake of God and purely with a sincere intention, not seeking worldly praise. Another scenario of the same action could be that he saved the drowning person solely for the praise of people, an ostentatious move done in order to be seen to be a hero. But let us suppose that the man who jumped in to save the drowning person did so in the pitch dark, when no one was around, diminishing the possibility of him doing it for ostentatious reasons. The response is that it could still have been the case that the man jumped into the river to save the person, despite the fact that no one was around to observe his heroics, with the sole intention that the saved person would tell others who would subsequently praise him, or even merely doing it for the praise of the drowning person.

A third scenario could see the man jumping into the river to save the drowning person, not apparently for the praise

of the drowning person or of others, but rather for a deeper psychological motive in which the subconscious association of saving the person, even though he is not necessarily cognizant of such an ulterior motive, is still linked to his action being lauded. Imām al-Ghazālī termed this kind of subconscious mental association—centuries before the likes of Pavlov—as 'preceding conception by inverse' [*sabq al-taṣawwur ilā al-ʿaks*]. Even if this natural, subconscious motive is not found, the man who jumps into the river to save the person did so because he reflected that if the situation was reversed and no one tried to save him that would be a disaster, that alone would incite him to save the drowning person. If the man jumped into the river with no motive at all, it would be deemed as stupidity and an attempted suicide.

Strange as they may seem, these scenarios demonstrate that an action deemed universally good can have many realities, and the only one who can determine what is truly good or bad is God. Numerous other human actions, seemingly good, become untangled in this way and one realises that there is no way the mind is free to determine the true merits of those actions. Such a propensity to mistaken judgement indicates the human need for divine help. In exactly the same way the intellect will fall short of understanding 'the full picture' and mistake God and His divine judgements regarding suffering. God tells us, ﴾*But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not*﴿ [Qur'ān 2:216].

4.26 GOD'S LAW

Why do we need law? Why didn't God just create us and leave us to our own law making? This question supposes a

primal cause that creates everything and leaves us to our own devices. This would then mean that man could devise his own laws to govern in the way man pleases. The problem with this is that it would mean that everyone will give his own opinion regarding the status quo which already happens, like deciding the appropriate punishment of murder with intent or in what instances capital punishment was justified. Is euthanasia or abortion justified, in any circumstances? These problems and many similar types of problems can only be resolved by a divine law.

Divinely revealed law sets parameters on what should be deemed morally and ethically acceptable. What it seemingly leaves out allows for differences of opinion upon those things not deemed immutable. The scope for juristic difference and discretional laws is left open, which is quite vast and in each field of jurisprudence, many man-made laws are permitted or adapted, as long as the fundamentals are not altered or corrupted, since they govern the essential preservation of human civilisation. These preserves of the divinely revealed law are referred to as 'the objectives of *Sharīʿa* Law' [*maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*], which aim to preserve the faith, life, sanity, wealth, progeny, and reputation of all citizens.

Each objective comes with necessities, essentials and additional luxuries. For instance, life has necessities, then essentials, and then luxuries; and so too legal objectives. These objectives are ordered in priority and each one is prioritised in accordance with its specific order. If any of the objectives clash, then the necessity of the first objective is prioritised, then the necessity of the next, and then of the next, and so on. If the necessity of any one of the six objectives clashes with the essentials or luxuries of any other objectives, then priority is always given to the necessities. In the case of a clash between essentials and luxuries, then the essentials are always given

priority over luxuries irrespective of the other objectives. An example of a necessity is the need to eat the bare minimum to stay alive, while the essential aspect is eating wholesome foods regularly, and a luxury would be eating delicacies. The divinely revealed law will prioritise these things in this order.

Atheists and non-Muslims generally object to the *Sharīʿa* in particular, some referring to the divine law as a celestial North Korean ordination promoting genocide, infanticide, abuse, slavery, annexation, plunder, witch-burning, torture and rape. Aside from hasty generalisations and superficial knowledge of what the *Sharīʿa* actually is, politically motivated events and groups, drawing on selective history, cultures, and sociological factors often compound their misconceived ideas with the divinely revealed law and valid hermeneutics of the Qurʾān and prophetic traditions. These fallacies and objections will be covered in Chapter Six.

What should be noted at the moment is that humanity has been endowed with intellectual prowess and abilities that exceed those of other creatures in the animal kingdom. What God has bestowed atheists will assert that nature or Darwinian evolution has given them by natural selection—abilities like rational thought, abstraction, logic, mathematics, reasoning and understanding—everything that man has used to subjugate the earth and its natural resources, constructing roads into and under mountains, inventing satellites, aeroplanes and many other forms of transport, the intellect and freewill given to man has seen almost everything subjugated to humanity. With no divinely revealed law, humankind would only make its own tyrannical laws permitting men to destroy, pillage, rape and plunder without any true guidance. Even the gross misinterpretations of God's divinely revealed law are humankind's doing.

If human beings are left to their own laws and devices—without a divinely revealed law and without the odd intervention of God-created disasters, deaths, pestilence, disease and other 'created natural occurrences'—the individual can easily become a tyrant who claims divinity for himself. In ancient times, Pharaoh and Nimrod, and today countless despots lined up to promote tyranny. Man has always been in need of spiritual and legal guidance to fulfil his role as the caretaker on earth.

This responsibility to be the caretaker of the earth during our short-lived existence means that man ordinarily can take benefit from the earth and its natural resources without restraint. Man has this responsibility within the divinely revealed law by which God sets out the main principles for man to follow. God in His Wisdom knows how to provide, to whom, and in the proportion known only to Him. This is why God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*If Allah had extended provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the Earth. But He sends down in an amount which He wills. Indeed, He is, of His servants, Acquainted and Seeing*﴿ [Qur'ān 42:27].

4.27 AN IMPERFECT WORLD

Some people like to point to the imperfections in the world or anything that seems purposeless, ignoring the many things that have a deep complex meaning, which would make those imperfections pale into insignificance. During the early period of Darwinian evolution theory, scientists were of the opinion that there were many vestigial organs that had no function. As science advanced however, the functions of many of those organs were discovered. This is the nature of science and the

hasty generalisations of atheist polemics towards God creating an imperfect world is one of them. Such a person is like a man who walks into a building and observes the architecture, the embellishment and decoration, and the many functions of various parts of the building along with its furniture, but then sees a nail protruding from one of the walls which seemingly has no function, on sight of which, he exclaims, 'I know there is no architect for this building because there are things in here that have inherent flaws and design imperfections.' In doing so, he ignores everything else he has observed or gives it some fantastic explanation.

God has created this world as a temporary stopover for humanity. The world is like a train station where passengers wait for a short while and then they are transported to another destination. There are many things God has created for the use of man and creatures, with man having the additional gifts of intellect and freewill, by which he gains the responsibility for being a caretaker on earth the short time he is here. There are sufficient resources for everyone on earth, but mismanagement allows those resources to be plundered and depleted, by all alike. It is man's doing that millions of tonnes of food are wasted every year, or millions of gallons of milk thrown into the seas, despite people starving as a result of man-made famines. It is man's doing that there are wars and nuclear weapons, and other weapons that maim and dismember. Chemical weapons are man's doing. Loans to already exploited and plundered countries in the abused world with high interest rates are man's doing. Cutting down the Amazon—the world's lungs—is man's doing. Political and sectarian violence is man's doing. Extremist ideologies and misinterpretation of holy books is man's doing. Poisoning the air, destroying the ozone layer, global warming and melting the ice caps, polluting the seas and biosphere are all man's do-

ing. Exploiting politics, religion, the church, money and the economy, orphans, children, widows and the vulnerable are similarly all man's doing. Causing unnecessary homelessness, poverty, illnesses, and various other evils just extend the list.

In fact, the various objections against God seem insignificant when compared with the human evil that human freewill permits. People complain about God creating natural disasters, but fail to remember that ninety-nine percent and more of the time when there are no natural disasters and the fact that God has given us an earth which is inhabitable and good for most of the time for the most of humanity, and that the majority of the evil in the world is the doing of man who, albeit with a lifetime's responsibility, was given intellect, reasoning and freewill. This is why God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have done, so that Allah may cause them to taste the consequences of some of their deeds, and perhaps they might return to the Right Path*﴿ [Qur'ān 30:41].

The rule, as outlined by God Himself, is that whatever may happen to humanity through His decree, and without human choice, the outcome will always be good. Humans not having complete knowledge of the whole, are unable to comprehend the divine wisdom straight away and indeed sometimes not at all, that is until the afterlife. Human actions that are evil, on the other hand, are different. God cannot be described as evil, as the very meaning of evil is to undermine and violate that which does not belong to the one doing the violating. This cannot be the case with God as He, unlike humanity, owns and creates everything. God says regarding the outcome of human evil, ﴾*Whatever good befalls you is from God and whatever evil befalls you is from yourself. We have sent you—O Prophet—as a messenger to all people. And God is sufficient as a Witness*﴿ [Qur'ān 4:79].

4.28 WHAT IS THE WISDOM OF GOD CREATING EVIL?

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God creates everything, which includes the human freewill and He knows what people will do with that freewill, yet God does not always intervene in the evil actions of others. Additionally, God will allow disasters, pestilence, diseases, earthquakes, volcanoes and other events beyond the scope of human autonomy.

With regard to human actions, a distinction should be made between the divine will and that which God is pleased with. Not everything is pleasing to God. The will of God relates to what God creates. If Zayd decides to pray with his own freewill, then this action of praying is an action that Zayd has acquired through his freewill which has been created by the will of God, and when Zayd decides to pray, God creates that action for him, once Zayd has made the choice and carries through with the intention. On the other hand, if Zayd decides not to pray, then Zayd is exercising his freewill to abandon a particular action by choice, also possible within the divine will, even though it might provoke the displeasure of God. This summarises the acute distinction between the divine will and the divine pleasure.

Similarly, a distinction between the divine knowledge of how things will be and then the subsequent creation of those thing must be kept in mind. If God knows that Zayd throughout his life will consume twenty-thousand chapati flatbreads, this knowing must be held distinct from the fact that when Zayd is born and grows into adulthood and subsequently throughout his life eats those chapatis, this knowing relates not only to the creation of Zayd but also the creation of those chapatis and the means and freewill by which Zayd consumes them.

If Zayd makes the decision to kill Bakr using a gun, Zayd will make this decision with his own freewill. God knows the motives of Zayd and creates within him the ability to do what Zayd wants to do, and this is the meaning of God's will, while Zayd has the freewill to choose that action. When Zayd fires the bullet into Bakr and the bullet pierces the skin causing bleeding, if God ordains for Bakr's soul to be removed, then it is God's will that Bakr dies even though the responsibility lies with Zayd's action. This is similar to someone drinking poison; if God wills, He can stop the effect of the poison and if He wills, He will create the killing effect in the poison since everything happens by the will and might of God. Zayd, however, will be responsible for his action, the product of his own freewill, that of firing the bullet. For that he will be accountable to God on the Day of Judgement.

The question may be asked, 'Why doesn't God intervene when humans commit evil like Zayd's decision to kill?' The response is that God has intervened, many times, not least in creating the means by which much human evil is deterred, and even if God did not intervene directly at that particular point of the action, if the entire picture were presented, including the outcome of the victim and the perpetrator, it would make much more sense. This is why the Day of Judgement and the afterlife is a rational necessity, for if it were not, good and bad would be equal. Evil people who have committed monstrosities would die and if there were no afterlife it would mean that they had been acquitted, effectively amounting to there being no difference between good and bad.

Logically, atheism is the rejection of any good or bad, with the underlying motivation for atheists being self-benefit, self-interest, averting any harm to oneself, and avoiding trouble for the sake of self-preservation. In fact, some atheists would have no real hesitation in committing evil actions if they could

be sure of no backlash, like some hypocritical, pretentious and self-righteous theists do.

Further to the point regarding divine intervention into acts of human evil through their own volition is that if God intervened at every point humans decided to carry out evil, then there would be no freewill and there would be no meaning to someone being legally responsible. For that reason, there is an afterlife and a Day of Judgement when human injustices will be rectified, although in many instances, people will still be rewarded and blessed on earth while others will be punished or chastened prior to dying. God mentions why He does not intervene in many human choices when He says, ﴾*Had your Lord so willed—O Prophet—all people on earth would have certainly believed, every single one of them! Would you then force people to become believers?*﴿ [Qur'ān 10:99]. God also mentions how the believer can be rewarded on earth also, so that people do not doubt that goodness reaps worldly fruits; ﴾*Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds*﴿ [Qur'ān 16:97]. The condition for any action to be accepted is that it be done solely for the sake of God and not for any ulterior motive. Whenever luxury or a worldly life is condemned in the Qur'ān it is in the context of greed, selfishness, corruption and harmful attachment to material wealth.

How often do people comment on Muslims who perpetrate evil and not give charity, being shown up by non-Muslims who do charitable and humanitarian acts, yet all the while the Muslims believing they will have salvation and the others not? Surely it is impossible to disregard good humanitarians like Princess Diana and Mother Teresa.

The response is quite simple in regard to specific individuals since we cannot know their individual judgement and can only go by what is apparent. A Muslim who does evil acts might only nominally be a Muslim or a hypocrite who just shows an outward adherence to faith. As for good actions, they are only accepted by God in the Hereafter if they are done purely for His sake and not for any ulterior motive. This would require correct faith in God and acting piously solely for His sake; an action which outwardly is pious but inwardly corrupt would not be accepted from a Muslim. Princess Diana and Mother Teresa did many humanitarian works, but did they do them for God or another motive? If it were for any other purpose, then there is no reward with God. Did the two die with correct beliefs and faith? Only God knows. Only He can judge individuals and we as Muslims must content ourselves with supplicating for those who outwardly profess Islam, even though the realities of individuals are known solely to God.

The only way to determine whether a specific human action is evil is by resorting to divine revelation first, prior to intellect, customs and society. Man is raised in nobility when he spurns base desires and chooses what is moral, ethical, angelic and good. This, and this alone, is what raises the status of man. God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*Indeed, we have honoured the children of Ādam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged them far above many of Our creatures*﴿ [Qur'ān 17:70]. This is the very purpose and meaning of legal responsibility, nobility gained when a person has the option of doing the opposite. For instance, if someone is praised for their generosity, they are only praised because they could have been miserly. If someone does not have to fight the desire to be stingy, their generosity is not praiseworthy.

These choices will be taken into account on the Day of Judgement and we humans will never have access to the full picture or the divine wisdom behind events.

If Zayd had not killed Bakr, then Bakr would have lived on to do what? Only God knows.

In summary, the main response with regard to human evil and God-created disasters and what atheists deem as evil is where God says of Himself, ﴾*He cannot be questioned about what He does, but they will all be questioned*﴿ [Qur'ān 21:23]. This is because the actions of God are not the same as the actions of creation. They are not the same and to equate the two is incommensurable. This also implies that everything around us belongs to Allah. If a person says, 'Why has God removed my eyesight?' The answer is that it never belonged to you but belonged to God, as to Him belongs everything. In what He gives or takes there will always be a divine wisdom whether we know it or not.

Secondly God states, ﴾*Verily, your Lord is the doer of what He wills*﴿ [Qur'ān 11:107]. God is not compelled to do what humans want from Him or what we deem as good. Goodness is, in reality, created by God and not the other way around. If God manifests Himself as the One who harms, He cannot be described as an oppressor or evil doer because, as we have seen, the meaning of oppression is the taking away of the right, property or anything else that does not belong to the oppressor. If a person kills another person, he is taking away something that did not belong to him. If someone beats up another person, he would have violated the rights of another that do not belong to himself. This cannot apply to God since everything belongs to Him, so when God takes the souls of people and creates death, this cannot be described as oppression simply because these souls and lives belong to God.

God could destroy everything on Earth and it would not be evil or oppression, ﴾*If Allah were to punish people immediately for their wrongdoing, He would not have left a single living being on earth. But He delays them for an appointed term. And when their time arrives, they cannot delay it for a moment, nor can they advance it*﴿ [Qurʾān 16:61].

If God had not created any suffering on Earth, many more would have claimed divinity. It is said regarding the Pharaoh of the Exodus, who some believe to have been Ramesses II, that he never suffered a headache or any illnesses and this led him to think of himself as divine. If humanity were not limited by suffering the human being would have no restrictions to the evil he willingly perpetrates. If people suffer no problems, they can become very arrogant or contract spiritual ailments. God created things around us in such a way that we as human beings can subdue elephants and lions, but a weak creature like the mosquito can give us malaria. We can make the tiger afraid so that he avoids our villages out of fear of humans, yet the household fly we can scarcely repel or catch when it flies in our face.

God creates disease and pestilence to manifest human limitations. Earthquakes happen very rarely, most of the time the earth being still and tranquil, yet from time to time God allows the tectonic plates to move and causes earthquakes which lead to people dying and suffering. These also serve to show our human role as caretakers of the Earth and that we have a Lord who sees everything.

One of the main lessons in all of this is the passing life of this world and the preparation for the next. This life is like an airport we are passing through and not the final destination. If God had not created this world with imperfections, suffering and other problems, then humans would become too attached

to this worldly life and would not want to leave it. What suffering could be worse than leaving a perfect world. If the world were perfect, and God had created it perfect, the atheist would be asking why we have to leave such a perfect world and why God was limiting our freewill by intervening and preventing evil? God has created the imperfections and suffering in this world, ﴾*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return'*﴿ [Qur'ān 2:155-156]. When the believer responds by affirming that everything belongs to God, he knows that God gives and takes as He wills and that the return for everyone is back to God from this temporary abode. God says, ﴾*O humanity! Indeed, you are labouring restlessly towards your Lord, and will eventually meet the consequences*﴿ [Qur'ān 84:6].

God says, ﴾*No disaster strikes upon the Earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being; indeed that, for Allah, is easy. In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult (in pride) over what He has given you. And Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful*﴿ [Qur'ān 57:22-23].

"There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers."

—Sherlock Holmes in 'The Naval Treaty'

CHAPTER FIVE
Islam & Science

5.1 THE CLASH OF MODERN SCIENCE

WHAT IS TERMED as 'modern science' today is actually classified in Sunnī *Kalām* methodology as *'ḥukm al-ʿāda'*, which is empirical judgement; a judgement relating to testability, whether by experiment, observed or inductive phenomena; testable or falsifiable theories relating to the material world.

For a *Kalām* specialist, none of this contradicts the tenets of faith, neither the Qurʾān nor the prophetic narrations. On the contrary, however, New Atheists see a stark difference between a belief in God and science, not just a difference but actual incoherence and incompatibility between the two. Religious sensitivities are seen as gap filling for whenever science has yet to breakthrough in any field of study; such as the first replicating gene, or the failed attempts to replicate the chemical beginnings of life—the theoretical primordial soup. Science is seen as attempting to remove the fog from such matters, while religion is seen as superstitious myth that fills the gaps with creation stories or imaginary God-filling explanations. To Islam, on the other hand, science is seen as the study of the physical world and matter in its own right; the ability of human beings to subjugate the material realm

for their own benefit and for the benefit of the planet and all creatures. Nothing in real science that is a matter of fact contradicts the tenets of Islam. All beliefs that relate to the metaphysical realm are just recognised to be beyond the scope of science. This is why Muslims should have no fear of scientific research and progress, and those who do oppose scientific research, or the progress of science, have no understanding of Islam. Anyone who claims an incoherence between Islam and real science either does not understand Islam or does not understand science.

5.2 THE SUBJECT OF SCIENCE

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The study of anything must proceed from the formal cause, or the essential nature of a thing and its quiddity. It tells us of the 'because' or the 'what it is'. The formal cause of a headache is the feeling of pain and throbbing in the head. The formal cause of a chair is the shape which permits someone to sit down. The formal cause informs us of what is actually being studied.

The material cause, on the other hand, tells us what the thing being studied is made of, the actual content of what is being studied, the raw material of its makeup. The material cause of the headache would be dehydration, for instance. The material cause of a chair is the wood it is made out of.

Science will also study the extrinsic nature of something which includes the efficient cause, which is that which makes, moves or changes the effect. The efficient cause of the headache is a draught of air or the inaccessibility of water. The efficient cause of the chair is the carpenter.

Another extrinsic cause is the purpose of something, a purpose that can be both conscious or not, or what we can term the end goal. The final cause of a headache is to notify the person that he needs to drink water. The final purpose of the chair is that people can utilise it to sit on.

This final cause, which we could say is the reason why the efficient cause acted as it did, is what modern philosophy views with suspicion. Modern Western science, or more exactly Scientism, has derogated belief in a final cause, more so since a purpose is not necessary when explaining something. It is like deeming the human as a biological machine with no purpose, or the mind as a biological motor, even though it is common sense to see purpose though that purpose may be unknown. However, the final cause of anything is not necessarily known through the mind alone.

Scientism is more of a philosophy than science itself, for as we have said, science is a neutral endeavour. Scientism believes that only science can provide objectively reliable knowledge even though this is patently untrue when it comes to things like beauty, love, art and music, for instance. The scientific method, on the other hand, is the key that opens a door to whatever is unknown and a way to investigate that. Science is a refinement of the method of investigation that we use on a daily basis. Science is a result of a problem arising or which poses as a problem that must be resolved.

The mind is stimulated to resolve a challenge. The problem solving and theoretical thinking that goes into the problem solving is treated as false and tested multiple times until it is proven true. This is different to things we take for granted, like our sense do, on a daily basis. In science, however, universal doubt is the starting point according to Descartes, where nothing is assumed. The process of inquiry and con-

stant questioning that follows is theoretical and opens up various possibilities which eventually lead to a hypothesis and a possible explanation. This leads to data collection and a search for corroborating evidence to support the theory. These theories are sometimes causal and investigate the efficient cause, but sometimes a theory will look at the 'what', like investigating the composition of something.

A scientific hypothesis must be relevant to the problem under investigation and it must have simplicity; a parsimonious explanation, and it should consist of data which is verifiable or testable. At the same time, such a theory must be compatible with what we already know of proven or probable theories. The theory must have a strong explanatory schema and an ability to provide future predictive data. If a hypothesis is not falsifiable then it is not science. Things that cannot be labelled as disprovable, yet are considered truths, do not fall into the scientific domain.

In science, everything is treated with suspicion, as false until proven true. The hypothesis does not control or slant the data collected, but rather the data constrains the hypothesis with the scientist following the data, keeping an open mind and not bending to personal bias. Ockham's razor is especially helpful here in terms of provoking the simplest and best explanation even though this may not be true of other non-scientific truths. Stephen Hawking points out in 'A Brief History of Time':

> "Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it. No matter how many times the results of experiments agree with some theory, you can never be sure that the next time the result will not contradict the theory."[50]

Science and scientific experiment, while falling into the domain of observable judgement and the correlation between things, nevertheless impart near subjective certainty for the scientist. However, judgements made by the mind are different to those relating to observable phenomena and what is deemed as scientifically impossible. Confusing the two is a common mistake.

5.3 MIRACLES

If someone informed a peasant from medieval times that metal could fly and could carry people to distant lands in a few hours, they would think it impossible. But what type of impossibility would this be? Is it impossible as a result of the norms that we observe, or rationally impossible? The correct response would be that metal flying and carrying people to distant lands is rationally possible, as we observe with aeroplanes today, but during the medieval period it was impossible to conceive in terms of the contemporary norms and habitual judgements.

This is where common mistakes are made in understanding the rational possibility of miracles in Islam. A miracle may commonly be understood, though not rationally impossible, as a violation of the correlation and/or habitual judgement of that thing. For example, if we assume the correlation between water flowing downwards with the laws of nature, it might be rationally possible for water to run upwards and thus contravene the normal observable correlation. Such contraventions of the norm when coupled with a challenge from an unbeliever to a prophet of God would be termed a miracle. Miracles are a violation of what we may deem the correlation between two things in nature, yet this violation may not be

an irrational violation. Describing it as unscientific merely means that it has contravened a correlation that a scientist hypothesises as almost certain.

When the Prophet Abraham ﷺ was cast into the fire, the fire became cool and did not burn him. This disengagement of burning from fire violates the norm considered rationally possible but not the convention that such a rare moment in observable nature could happen. If it were not rare and in contradistinction to the norm, then it would not be deemed a miracle but the empirical norm.

David Hume states:

> "When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates should really have happened."[51]

This statement of David Hume is quite acceptable. When we hear about the violation of a norm, it could easily be a deception, or it could be true. The distinction between a prophetic miracle and the common understanding of a miracle is that a prophetic miracle is only manifested after a challenge by an unbeliever. Prophetic miracles in Islam must further be verified via the chains of narration that themselves have a critical method of verification and narrator accreditation and discreditation, as well as what is known as *mutawātir*. This amounts to the mass transmission of an event observed experientially together with a record of the number of people that experienced such that it would be rationally impossible for them to concur on a lie. If a miracle is narrated through *mutawātir* in the annals of Ḥadīth, it is accepted due to the

impossibility of so many people from innumerable distinct backgrounds concocting a lie.

David Hume expresses his thoughts on this by saying:

> "There is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good sense, education and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable."[52]

Theologians would assert that the prerequisites mentioned by Hume are fulfilled in Islam and its method of transmission. Narrations are recorded with the names and biographies of the transmitters, their credibility, memory, veracity, dates of birth and even travels undertaken for their study. All of these details are recorded in biographical entries in encyclopaedias and then cross-referenced with one another to avoid any absences or discrepancies amongst the narrators. Even after posterity and the recording of historical events, the narrations are cross-referenced and critiqued textually. This entire process is detailed in the Ḥadīth literature genre and is one of the great human scientific achievements and methods of preserving human history.

A common atheist scientific objection to religion relates to miracles and the metaphysical realm. This is despite the fact that Western philosophy has disputed the exact meaning of what the metaphysical is and the fact that metaphysics is the

process whereby the first cause or the immutable is studied. What is meant by metaphysics here is that which is beyond nature, that which is beyond the material realm and outside the scientific investigative range, like the existence or presence of angels and demons. However, the objection from these two perspectives is flawed because neither amount to a scientific proposition or hypothesis. The atheist claims that a miracle or anything to do with the metaphysical realm is an incoherent concept and a contradiction of science. The incoherence of a miracle is not the established meaning of a miracle but rather a violation of the norm, which is the agreed upon correlation between physical entities. That correlation however is not absolute, and the possibility of disengagement exists. When that disengagement occurs after a challenge has been made to a prophet by a non-believer, it is termed a miracle.

A miracle is from the word *iʿjāz* in Arabic, which means to render the challenger incapable of imitating the miracle, or it renders the taunts of the unbelievers defunct. Once the miracle has been performed, like raising the dead or increasing the abundance of food, it no longer exists and is not open to scientific investigation as it has expired and was a one-off occurrence. Simply put, a miracle is a violation of the general laws observed by human beings and organised by the human mind into laws. The possibility of these scientific laws being rendered sterile still exists and the only way of determining whether a miracle has occurred—a violation of the correlation of things which the pattern-finding human mind terms as a scientific law—is through verification, witness reports or observation.

Verification of any such occurrences would be through observation and witness reports. It is not the rational possibility of this occurring that Hume is questioning but rather the verification of such witness reports and investigating the veracity

of the transmitters and their senses, as anyone who sees such an occurrence first-hand may doubt their own faculties. This is exactly what the polytheists in pagan Makkah did when they saw numerous miracles occur at the hands of the Prophet ﷺ. They exclaimed, "Our eyes have been bewitched," even though it was they who had demanded a miracle.

Thus, in rational theology there is nothing about a miracle which is unscientific or irrational in the material world that falls within the judgement of the rationally permissible—in the mind's eye—and as long as it is not a rational impossibility and is verified through narrators of the event who witnessed it first-hand following a strict report verification methodology that is detailed in the Ḥadīth science.

5.4 THE METAPHYSICAL DOMAIN

The metaphysical domain, as defined above, is that which is beyond the material and testable realm and is also beyond the scientific method. While it cannot be rejected or accepted with absolute certainty by an atheist, for a Muslim, acceptance of reports relating to the unseen realm is based on the prior acceptance of the Prophet ﷺ who related such information of the unseen realm. Therefore, while the information relating to the unseen realm cannot be disproven in the material realm or does not contradict rational judgement, then it lies in a neutral domain and has no corollary with science or the scientific method, lying as it does beyond its scope.

The materialist and the atheist will limit human experience to sense perception, while the religious believer will extend certainty into the metaphysical domain of the unseen, not expecting scientific proof through it being outside the domain

of science. As verification of news relating to the unseen realm—the world of angels or stories of the Jinn or devils—lies outside the scope of human verification for the most part, it is imperative that the veracity, trustworthiness and rationality of the informing prophet can be relied upon.

People believed in the truthfulness of prophets firstly through their integrity and then through their miracles. It is important to make these fine distinctions because when atheists mock the Qur'ān or prophetic reports relating to the unseen and not the material universe, they fall into a logical fallacy simply because such things are beyond the human verification process, so any critique should be directed at the coherence of the message and the credentials of narrators.

When Ibrāhīm, the son of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, passed away in the city of Madinah, a solar eclipse occurred at the same time. The people took this as a sign of the passing away of a great human, a belief they held prior to adopting Islam. When the Prophet ﷺ heard of such an unscientific belief spreading amongst the people, he was quick to correct their error. A charlatan could well have taken full advantage of the gullibility of the people and exploited the situation but Islam does not contradict empirical science or observational phenomena.

This is how one companion relates what happened:

> "We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when the sun eclipsed. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood up dragging his cloak till he entered the mosque. He led us in two cycles of prayer till the sun (eclipse) had cleared. Then the Messenger ﷺ said, 'The sun and the moon do not eclipse because of someone's death, so whenever you see these eclipses, pray and invoke (Allah) until the eclipse is over.'"[53]

The main distinction between science as understood by atheists and science as understood in Islam is that Muslims hold the position that everything has been created and is continually sustained by God, and it not being scientifically verifiable does not affect scientific research or progress at all.

Another variant of the same eclipse report reads:

> "The sun eclipsed in the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the day when (his son) Ibrāhīm died. So, the people said that the sun had eclipsed because of the death of Ibrāhīm. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'The sun and the moon do not eclipse because of the death or life of someone. When you see an eclipse pray and invoke God.'"[54]

What follows now is an elaboration relating to some claims made in the Qur'ān and prophetic reports that contradict known science.

5.5 THE BURĀQ

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Richard Dawkins was stunned by Mehdi Hasan during their 2012 interview when the latter affirmed that he believed in God, in miracles, and the Burāq. Richard Dawkins revealed his understanding of the Burāq when he asked, "Do you believe that Muḥammad rode on a winged horse...?"

By definition, that would be the wrong description of the Burāq. The Burāq, according to Islamic belief, is a metaphysical being that fleetingly came into this dimension and took the Prophet ﷺ on the Night Journey, which was only momentary in our conception of space and time, but exceedingly long in a parallel time dimension, despite the Burāq taking the form—

as described by the Prophet ﷺ—of a mule-like beast.

This claim of the Prophet ﷺ is not a scientific claim that can be verified by scientific methodologies, and atheists and others are at liberty to disbelieve in it, but the claim that it contradicts science is fallacious since it lies outside of the domain of verifiability. The Muslims, on the other hand, affirm the miraculous Night Journey [*isra*ʾ], the Ascension [*miʿrāj*] and the inter-dimensional Burāq through confirming the truthful character of the Prophet ﷺ. That is sufficient for any Muslim, but to claim it is unscientific because it contradicts science is an unverifiable claim.

The most that Richard Dawkins can say, to be exact, is that the Burāq is scientifically unknown and therefore unverifiable. He is at liberty to disbelieve such notions, even though he himself has entertained the possibility of alien life forms possibly having deposited the earliest self-replicating living cells on Earth that subsequently evolved into the sentient biological organisms that we have on Earth today.

The pagans mocked the Prophet ﷺ over the inter-dimensional journey and his travelling with body and soul, in particular how he could travel from Makkah to Jerusalem and back within one night which normally would take the trade caravans a month to travel. Now we know that metal can fly, in the form of an aeroplane, and that people can travel from Makkah to Jerusalem within a couple of hours. Incidentally, the pagans of Makkah then proceeded to test the Prophet on his knowledge of Jerusalem, knowing he had never visited it, asking him some intricate questions which only a visitor to the city of Jerusalem would know; all of which the Prophet ﷺ answered correctly.

5.6 THE SPLITTING OF THE MOON

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Richard Dawkins also mentioned the miracle of the splitting of the moon, a miracle that occurred in Makkah after polytheists had demanded the Prophet ﷺ to do if he was truly sent by God. At that point, the full moon was shining above a mountain. The Prophet ﷺ pointed at the moon and the moon split in two visible parts, which sometime later merged again.

The Islamic belief is that this only occurred within the divine power of God, but the objection arises from this event never being recorded in any annals of human history even if it were acceded to that many of the pagans of Makkah witnessed this astonishing event. It is important to note too that as soon as the moon had split and then was reattached, the pagans exclaimed that their eyes had been bewitched and that it was sorcery. The question is why this event was only recorded in Arab sources, in the Qur'ān and other oral traditions, but not found in other sources.

This objection overlooks the fact that the event occurred at night when most people were asleep, and even those who might have been awake at night would not tend to look outside at the sky or the moon. Even if they were outside, they would not be constantly looking up at the sky or the moon, as busy with other things. The event itself occurred for a very short amount of time, so even if someone was stargazing and momentarily looked away, for five minutes supposing, they could have easily missed witnessing the event.

Add to that that while it may have been night in Arabia, the moon was not necessarily visible everywhere. Clouds could have covered the moon or there could have been other reasons, and at least half the world was in daylight. The fact that the world population was not as dense as it is today

also drastically reduces the chance of any sighting or more particularly the subsequent recording of any such event. It should also be noted that the reports citing the splitting of the moon mention that it only occurred for a few moments and not for a long period of time, thus reducing the chance of any sightings to the minimum.

However, the eye-witness testimony regarding the splitting of the moon has been transmitted through unbroken chains of reliable scholars, so many that it is impossible to have been a conspiracy of collaboration to concoct such a report. Professor Hamidullah writes in his book *'Muḥammad Rasūlullah* ﷺ':

> "There is a very old tradition in Malabar, South-West Coast of India, that Chakrawati Farmas, one of their kings, had observed the splitting of the moon, the celebrated miracle of the Holy Prophet at Makkah, and learning on inquiry that there was a prediction of the coming of a Messenger of God from Arabia, he appointed his son as regent and set out to meet him. He embraced Islam at the hand of the Prophet, and when returning home, at the direction of the Prophet, died at the port of Zafar, Yemen, where the tomb of the 'Indian king' was piously visited for many centuries."

King Chakrawati Farmas of Malabar was a Chera king, Cheraman perumal of Kodungallure. He is recorded to have seen the moon split; the incident documented in a manuscript kept at the India Office Library, London[55].

This is corroborated by Ibn Kathīr (D. 1373 CE), who confirms in his monumental 'History' that this event of the moon splitting was sighted and recorded in India. It is interesting that if it is 9PM in Makkah, then in India it would be

11.30PM. The polytheists of Makkah are reported to have said, "This is magic he has performed, he would be unable to cast a spell on the eyes of the travellers and those not present, so check with the caravans that travel by night." When the travellers arrived from various directions at Makkah, they also affirmed seeing the moon being split[56].

5.7 CLAIMS OF SCIENTIFIC ERROR IN THE QUR'ĀN

In order to discredit the Qur'ān and prophetic reports (Ḥadīth which are positively and authentically attributed to the Prophet ﷺ), and subsequently to debunk Islam, many detractors of Islam cite verses of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that pertain to demonstrate factual errors. A factual error would have to entail an indisputable fact, otherwise, a scientific theory could undergo change or a paradigm shift when sufficient data reframes an entire hypothesis.

After a few demonstrations of what atheists and others commonly cite as errors, the reader will be able to gauge the scope of these types of arguments and their validity.

The Young Earth

This argument is actually used by atheists against those Christians who believe in an earth that has only been around for seven thousand years, then extended as a straw man argument to other Christians and by extension to Muslims. There is no mention of a seven-thousand-year old earth in the Qur'ān and such a notion is not a part of Islamic creed. The Muslims who narrated any narratives containing such claims did so from the Jews and the Christians, and such types of

reports are referred to as Israelite reports in the Ḥadīth nomenclature. Such Israelite reports have always been scrutinised and examined by theologians and scholars of exegesis and hermeneutics of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in light of other considerations and are not accepted blindly.

The setting of the Sun

A famous distortion is the abstracted claim that 'the Qur'ān asserts that the sun sets in a muddy lake [*ʿayn ḥamiʾa*]'. As if to say that in the hundreds of years of Islamic civilisation, including the early formative years of the early caliphate when science was advancing in Baghdad, not a single Arab or Persian scientist who understood the Qur'ān in its original tongue critiqued the Qur'ān for this unfounded claim of the sun setting in a muddy lake.

The verse under question is the narrative of an ancient king who travelled the earth to establish justice. The title given to the king is 'the Two-Horned One', though the name is not specified since the moral of the story is that justice can be established by any ruler at any given time. Many commentators have speculated as to the exact identity of this king, with opinions ranging from Alexander the Macedonian (the opinion of Imām al-Rāzī) to Cyrus of Persia, even though none of these opinions have been actually substantiated.

During the course of his journey, the Two-Horned One travels to the west. The Qur'ān describes this particular part of the journey by stating, ﴾*Until he reached the setting point of the sun, which appeared to him to be setting in a spring of murky water, where he found some people. We said, 'O Dhū al-Qarnayn! Either punish them or treat them kindly'*﴿ [Qur'ān 18:86]. This verse is referring to the vision of the king relating to the setting point of the sun on the horizon

of a murky or muddy lake of water. It is not, in any way, asserting an empirical fact regarding the setting of the sun.

Talking Creatures in the Qur'ān

This objection to the Qur'ān is based upon the story of Prophet Sulaymān ﷺ which mentions the communication of an ant to the rest of the ant colony. Here is what the Qur'ān states, ﴾*When they came across a valley of ants, an ant warned, 'O ants! Go quickly into your homes so Solomon and his armies do not crush you, unknowingly'*﴿ [Qur'ān 27:180].

Communication of ants is an established fact as ants work as a community and are friendly to each other, communicating by a chirping sound called stridulation. A Key Stage 2 BBC article for science classes states:

> "This is a sound made by rubbing two parts of their abdomen together. They use this to communicate to others where the best leaves are on the plant and if they are in trouble. Ants also communicate using signals with their legs and use their antennae to sense different chemicals that other ants lay on the ground called pheromones."[57]

The communication of a hoopoe bird is also mentioned in the same story a few verses after. The hoopoe bird is known onomatopoeically for its calling sound 'hu-pu' and 'hu-po'. The females are known to wheeze for mating and courtship, while young hoopoes are known for their loud 'tiii' sound when begging for food. One research paper states:

> "However, the results indicate that males used song not only in intrasexual but also in intersexual communication, and

> that they tried to attract a mate by singing, especially when they had lost their mates. This kind of evidence, although indirect, has frequently been used to claim a mate-attraction function of song in many other species. In conclusion, Hoopoe males seem to use song both for mate attraction and mate guarding. This indicates that song in this species provides useful information for both sexes and, therefore, song might somehow also reflect male quality as it does in other species."[58]

This citation is sufficient to demonstrate the valid possibility of communication amongst Hoopoe birds, and the fact that it is not an unscientific claim even if some may take exception to this.

Communication between bees is well known and is done through a dancing ritual that was discovered by Karl von Frisch, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Von Frisch described the dance as 'the most astounding example of non-primate communication that we know.' The dance, performed by a honeybee upon returning to the colony having successfully located a food source, offers information on the presence, odour, quality, direction, and distance of a pollen source, enabling nest-mates to exploit it. This direction and distance communication (also called 'dance language') is unique to honeybees. The direction information is conveyed through the orientation of the 'waggle run', whereas the distance information is expressed through its duration.

This is only a fairly recent study and shows how many things relating to the animal kingdom still remain undiscovered. The Qur'ān tells us regarding the honeybee, ﴾*And your Lord inspired the bees: 'Make your homes in the mountains, the trees, and in what people construct, and feed from the flower of any fruit you please and follow the ways your Lord*

has made easy for you,' From their bellies comes forth liquid of varying colours, in which there is healing for people. Surely in this is a sign for those who reflect❵ [Qur'ān 16:68-69].

There are two noteworthy accuracies here of the Qur'ān.

The first is the allusion to the pathways made easy for the bee, which we now know is through the uniqueness of communication amongst the bees.

The second is that the bee is addressed using the female pronoun, and we now know that all the worker bees are sterile females that forage and produce honey. Within a hive there is the queen bee, the worker bees and the male drones. It is the worker bee that makes the honey form in its belly that is precisely described by the Qur'ān. The worker bees were always recognised as doing the work of collecting pollen and producing honey, but it was much later that they were classified as female, most likely in the 1800s.

Shakespeare writes with the male pronoun in reference to the worker bees in 'Henry V' (I.ii):

For so work the honeybees,

Creatures that by a rule in nature teach

The act of order to a peopled kingdom.

They have a king, and officers of sorts,

Where some like magistrates correct at home;

Others like merchants venture trade abroad;

Others like soldiers, armed in their stings,

Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds,

Which pillage they with merry march bring home

To the tent-royal of their emperor;

Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
The singing masons building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up the honey,
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate,
The sad-ey'd justice, with his surly hum,
Delivering o'er to executors pale
The lazy yawning drone.

A Global Flood

This objection relates to the flood in the time of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ, which if it were global would be known through archaeology and paleontological diggings around the world from observation of the layers of the earth. In reality, the Qur'ān does mention a flood that destroys early civilisation and in which the remaining humans survive on an ark upon which animals were also taken, but there are stark differences with any other account of the ancient flood that make it much more comprehensible.

The civilisation Nūḥ ﷺ was addressing was centred within the area that was flooded, and that many believe to be Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent. So, the part of the Earth that was flooded was a localised area of early civilisation and not necessarily the entire globe, and neither is the global flooding a necessary Islamic tenet of belief or explicitly stated in the Qur'ān. The animals that were taken on board the Ark are not specified and it is speculation for anyone to suggest it included all the wild animals of the earth including predatory beasts. The Qur'ān states, ﴾ *We said to Noah, 'Take into the*

Ark from every (species) a pair along with your family—except those against whom the decree to drown has already been passed—and those who believe.' But none believed with him except for a few﴿ [Qur'ān 11:40]. The wording here is: '*Min kull(in) zawjayn ithnayn*', which literally means 'from every a pair', not specifying wild beasts, local native animals or domesticated animals.

There is an interesting mention of the location of the Ark of Nūḥ ﷺ in the Qur'ān, ﴾*And it was said, 'O earth! Swallow up your water. And O sky! Withhold your rain.' The floodwater receded and the decree was carried out. The Ark rested on Mount Judi, and it was said, 'Away with the wrongdoing people!'*﴿ [Qur'ān 11:45]. The mountain Judi is 7,000 feet high and near the edge of the Ararat mountain region, located in Şırnak Province in Turkey's South eastern Anatolia Region, the landscape surrounding the mountain is arid. The boat-like formation discovered on Mount Judi is exactly 515 feet long and at the Hebrew rate of 20.6 inches to the cubit is exactly the same as the 300 cubits referred to in the book of Genesis, although the width of 138 feet is against the biblical 86 feet. Archaeologists have actually found the multi-meter thick layer of water-borne mud. In the Mesopotamian region there are many flood sites and even archaeological sites of towns which were flooded. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers flooded in tandem many times through ice cap melt prior to 3000 BC caused mass flooding south of Mesopotamia and other regions.

The Origin of Semen According to the Qur'ān

This objection states that the Qur'ān does not accurately mention the origin of semen. The verse in question says, ﴾*They were created from a spurting fluid, stemming from*

between the backbone and the ribcage﴿ [Qur'ān 86:6-7].

The Qur'ān does not specify the liquid that is being mentioned. It states that a spurting liquid comes out from between the areas which are known as '*al-ṣulb*' and '*al-tarā'ib*', the former translated here as 'backbone' and the latter as 'ribcage'. As sperm travels through the male reproductive tract, it is bathed in fluids produced and secreted by the various tubules and glands of the male reproductive system. It is these fluids that could easily be meant in the Qur'ān. The 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' states:

> "During the process of ejaculation, liquids from the prostate gland and seminal vesicles are added, which help dilute the concentration of sperm and provide a suitable environment for them. Fluids contributed by the seminal vesicles are approximately 60 percent of the total semen volume; these fluids contain fructose, amino acids, citric acid, phosphorus, potassium, and hormones known as prostaglandins. The prostate gland contributes about 30 percent of the seminal fluid; the constituents of its secretions are mainly citric acid, acid phosphatase, calcium, sodium, zinc, potassium, protein-splitting enzymes, and fibrolysin (an enzyme that reduces blood and tissue fibres). A small amount of fluid is secreted by the bulbourethral and urethral glands; this is a thick, clear, lubricating protein commonly known as mucus."[59]

These fluids come from various locations in the pelvis and human anatomy, which also include between the '*al-ṣulb*', which can be translated as the loins, and '*al-tarā'ib*' the ribcage.

Furthermore, by the Qur'ān specifying that this liquid originates from between the backbone and the ribcage, this suggests that the locus of the origin is central. Both, the seminal vesicles and prostate, are centrally located within the body,

appearing aligned with the linea alba.

The Pharaoh of the Flood & the Pyramid

Identifying the Pharaoh of the Exodus at the time of Mūsā ﷺ was one of the challenges of archaeology and an unravelling of the enigma of human history, before the findings of various ancient Egyptian mummies and the deciphering of hieroglyphics via the Rosetta Stone and the tireless efforts of Jean-François Champollion. At the time when the Qur'ān was revealed, the mummification process on the bodies of the pharaohs of Egypt was unknown, and little known after that for many centuries until the late 19TH century when they were discovered preserved in various tomb sites. Yet, the Qur'ān makes reference to the strange preservation of the body of pharaoh which early commentators of the Qur'ān interpreted differently, but after the bodies of the various pharaohs were found it became clear as to what God was referring to when He said, ﴾*We brought the Children of Israel across the sea. Then Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them unjustly and oppressively. But as Pharaoh was drowning, he cried out, 'I believe that there is no god except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am now one of those who submit.' He was told, 'Now, you believe? But you always disobeyed and were one of the corruptors. Today We will preserve your corpse so that you may become a sign for those who come after you. And surely most people are heedless of Our signs!'*﴿ [Qur'ān 11:90-92].

Interestingly, the preservation of the body of Pharaoh is referred to as a sign for the people, and also in another part of the Qur'ān the Ark of Nūḥ ﷺ is referred to as a sign when God says, ﴾*But We delivered him and those in the Ark, making it a sign for all people*﴿ [Qur'ān 29:15]. The bodies of the

pharaohs and possibly that of the identified pharaoh, Rameses II, are viewable today in the Cairo Museum, while the remnants of the Ark of Nūḥ ﷺ are to be found on Mount Judi today, yet both can also be viewed worldwide via modern means of communication and information sharing.

The Qur'ān also alludes to the method of the construction in ancient Egypt which may well be how the pyramids were constructed, when God mentions what Pharaoh says to his chief architect, ﴾*And Pharaoh said, 'O you chiefs, in no way do I know that you have a god other than me. So, kindle me (a fire), O Hāmān, upon the clay, then make for me a tower, that possibly I would view the god of Mūsā; and surely I indeed expect he is one of the liars'*﴿ [Qur'ān 28:38]. The interesting reference to burning clay may well explain how huge constructions were carried out. It may well be that an early form of concrete created using a mixture of limestone, clay, lime and water was transported to the building sites to be baked in fire and turned into stone for the construction, which makes more sense than the widely accepted theory that the pyramids were crafted of carved-out giant limestone blocks that workers carried up ramps.

Because of the inconsistency of popular theories relating to how the pyramids were constructed, many perplexing questions remain unsatisfactorily answered, like why—despite the existence of millions of tons of stone, carved presumably with copper chisels—has not one copper chisel ever been found on the Giza Plateau? It would make more sense that the pyramids were cast and fired *in situ* and not constructed by the lifting of heavy seventy tonne slabs to the summit. Yet, Elon Musk claims that aliens built the pyramids and many people believe such stories. The BBC reported:

> "Egypt has invited billionaire Elon Musk to visit the country and see for himself that its famous pyramids were not built by aliens. The SpaceX boss had tweeted what appeared to be support for conspiracy theorists who say aliens were involved in the colossal construction effort. But Egypt's international co-operation minister does not want them taking any of the credit. She says seeing the tombs of the pyramid builders would be the proof. The tombs discovered in the 1990s are definitive evidence, experts say, that the magnificent structures were indeed built by ancient Egyptians."[60]

Anyone, including aliens, can take credit for the building of the pyramids, but nowhere is it marked as the advancement of African civilization at a time when the rest of the world lagged far behind. It seems that some graduates of modern education sometimes choose to give credit to aliens to exclude God and at other times give credit to aliens instead of civilisations they deem inferior. This appears to be the case for the Egyptian pyramids.

A Flat Earth

Some critics of Islam have claimed the Qur'ān alleges that the Earth is flat. They derive this from the mentions of the favours of a liveable earth. Unlike other planets, like Mars for instance, Earth has a liveable surface and humanity is able to construct liveable homes, cities and other infrastructure.

These favours of God are enumerated in the Qur'ān with the word '*firāsh*', which means a spread. The verse in question would be translated as, ﴾*He is the One Who has made the Earth a place of settlement for you and the sky a canopy; and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. So do not knowingly set up equals to Allah*

in worship﴿ [Qur'ān 2:22], and similarly, ﴾*As for the Earth, we have spread it out. How superbly did We smooth it out!*﴿ [Qur'ān 51:48]. That all such verses in fact refer to a liveable and spacious earth is clear when God states that Nūḥ ﷺ said, ﴾*And Allah alone spread out the Earth for you to walk along its spacious pathways*﴿ [Qur'ān 71:219-20].

Words like spread, stretch, cradle and bed are epithets for the Earth and simply refer to its accommodating nature. Disparagers of Islam attempt to insist on only one meaning to these verses. If the odd commentator of the Qur'ān speculates on the earth being flat this would be a gross error on his part. Additionally, Imām al-Rāzī—the leading rational theologian and commentator on the Qur'ān—states that there is consensus among Muslim scholars that Earth is geoid-like[61].

The Cosmos Created in Six Days

A similar disparagement is attempted over the Qur'ānic statement, ﴾*Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and earth in six days*﴿ [Qur'ān 7:54]. But what they do not mention is that contained in the Qur'ān are definitions of the word 'day' encapsulating different time periods, ﴾*But a day with your Lord is indeed like a thousand years by your counting*﴿ [Qur'ān 22:47], or elsewhere, referring to the Day of Judgement, ﴾*Through which the angels and the holy spirit will ascend to Him on a Day fifty thousand years in length*﴿ [Qur'ān 70:4]. This demonstrates that the word 'day' in the Qur'ān refers to a relative concept of time.

Mountains & Earthquakes

One purpose of the mountains mentioned in the Qur'ān is, ﴾*And We have placed firm mountains upon the Earth so it*

does not shake with them, and made in it broad pathways so they may find their way❵ [Qur'ān 21:31], and elsewhere it is said, ❴*He created the heavens without pillars—as you can see—and placed firm mountains upon the Earth so it does not shake with you, and scattered throughout it all types of creatures. And We send down rain from the sky, causing every type of fine plant to grow on earth*❵ [Qur'ān 31:10], and elsewhere, ❴*He has placed into the Earth firm mountains, so it does not shake with you, as well as rivers, and pathways so you may find your way*❵ [Qur'ān 16:15]. Critics contended that the Qur'ān claims that mountains prevent earthquakes when we know very well that they do not.

The word in Arabic mentioned is *'rawāsī'*, which might be interpreted as likening the mountains to anchors. Anchors give stability to a boat when it is made to stop on water and in the Qur'ān are only mentioned in the context of a convulsing earth. The Arabic verb *'tamīd'* means to shake and is not the verb used for an earthquake which, in the imperfect, is *'yuzalzil'*.

A research paper investigating underwater topography and in particular seamounts states:

> "By providing multiple points of contact, seamounts stop plates from jolting from one site of resistance to another, and they thereby arrest the generation of massive 'megathrust' earthquakes."[62]

The abstract for this research paper states:

> "Seamount subduction is a common process in subduction zone tectonics. Contradicting a widely held expectation

> that subducting seamounts generate large earthquakes, seamounts subduct largely aseismically, producing numerous small earthquakes. On rare occasions when they do produce relatively large events, the ruptures tend to be complex, suggesting multiple rupture patches or faults. We explain that the seismogenic behaviour of these seamounts is controlled by the development and evolution of an adjacent fracture network during subduction and cannot be described using the frictional behaviour of a single fault. The complex structure and heterogeneous stresses of this network provide a favourable condition for aseismic creep and small earthquakes but an unfavourable condition for the generation and propagation of large ruptures."[63]

This would leave us to conclude that mountains do have a role in stopping plates from jolting in sites of resistance and are like shock absorbers that arrest the generation of massive earthquakes, and the Qur'ān cannot be faulted for describing the mountains as anchors since this is a befitting similitude.

5.8 THE QUR'ĀN IS NOT A BOOK OF SCIENCE

The Qur'ān affirms an orbiting sun and moon but does not mention anything relating to the heliocentric and geocentric models even though various interpreters have attempted to give those meanings to certain verses, ﴾*And He is the One Who created the day and the night, the sun and the moon—each travelling in an orbit*﴿ [Qur'ān 21:33]. Elsewhere in the Qur'ān God says, ﴾*It is not for the sun to catch up with the moon, nor does the night outrun the day. Each is travelling in an orbit of their own*﴿ [Qur'ān 36:40].

The sun rotates on its own axis once in about 27 days. This rotation was first detected by observing the motion of sunspots. The Sun's rotation axis tilts by about 7.25° from the axis of the Earth's orbit, so we see more of the Sun's northern pole in September of each year and more of its southern pole in March. Since the Sun is a ball of gas/plasma, it does not have to rotate rigidly like the solid planets and moons do. In fact, the Sun's equatorial regions rotate faster (taking only about 24 days) than the polar regions (which rotate once every 30 days), a 'differential rotation' that is currently an area of research in solar astronomy[64].

Some have attempted to interpret the above verses as referring to the solar apex. A cautionary point needs to be made here. Many verses in the Qur'ān relate to natural phenomena and can be interpreted to mean a few things. This is partly to do with the Arabic language where a single word can have various nuances. For this reason, it is erroneous for Muslims to claim that every scientific theory can be found in the Qur'ān—this is simply not true.

The main point to keep in mind is that the Qur'ān does not contradict empirical fact. An example of how one verse can inspire multiple interpretations is the verse, ﴾*By the sky, having paths*﴿ [Qur'ān 51:7]. The word that has been translated as paths is '*ḥubuk*', a word that can be translated as pathways, which historically has been translated as both visible pathways and those comprehended through spiritual insight. The word '*ḥubuk*' can also refer to threads, the original word referring to the tying of a camel firmly from the back '*maḥbūk*', and '*iḥtibāk*' but which also means the tightening of the waist wrap. Thus, linguistically, the same word can be translated and interpreted in many ways, none contradicting the other. Ibn al-Jawzī writes:

> "There are four interpretations regarding the meaning of 'having *ḥubuk*':
>
> First: of beautiful appearance. This was the view of Ibn ʿAbbās as narrated by Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa, and it was adopted by Qatāda.
>
> Second: of fine structure. This was the view of Mujāhid.
>
> Third: relating to adornment. This was the view of Saʿīd b. Jubayr, while Ḥasan said, 'Its *ḥubuk* are its stars.'
>
> Fourth: to do with pathways. This was the view of al-Ḍaḥḥāk and the linguists. Al-Farrāʾ said, '*Ḥubuk* means the ripples produced on surfaces, such as the sand if a slow wind passes over it, and still water if wind passes over it. The bends of the curly hair are *ḥubuk*...' Al-Zajjāj said, 'Linguists say that *ḥubuk* means the good ways. *Maḥbūk* is what was done with perfection. All the tracks that you see on the sand and water when wind passes over them are *ḥubuk*...'"[65]

More recently, people have attempted to interpret the path verse as string theory. This approach is incorrect for two reasons. The first being that such scientific hypotheses cannot be established with the certainty of, by way of example, the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, with string theory just one theory among many and without the rubric of absolute empirical certainty. The second reason is that the Qur'ān can only be interpreted correctly within the Arabic lexicon. Other ideas superimposed on Arabic, may fit a trending theory but may later undergo a major paradigm shift. Both Muslims and non-Muslims are today responsible for distorting the meanings of the Qur'ān, both ignoring the linguistic import to the meanings. An example of this is when some Muslims claim the following verse alludes to space travel, ﴾*O assembly of Jinn and humans! If you can penetrate beyond the realms of the heavens and the earth, then do so. But you cannot do that*

without Our authority﴿ [Qur'ān 55:33]. Linguistically, the preposition '*min*' is referring to the inability of humanity to travel out of the cosmos and not referring to travel into the cosmos or space, for if it were referring to the latter the preposition '*fī*' would be utilised.

Non-Muslims not surprisingly are also guilty of attempting to force a meaning not being stated or implied. The example of the sun setting in a muddy spring has already been mentioned. Another example imputes the stars being used as missiles against evil spirits and demons, thereby giving the impression that all stars are referred to by the Qur'ān and not shooting stars. The actual verses are, ﴾*And indeed, We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps, and made them as missiles for stoning eavesdropping devils, for whom We have also prepared the torment of the Blaze*﴿ [Qur'ān 67:5], and, ﴾*We used to take up positions there for eavesdropping, but whoever dares eavesdrop now will find a flare lying in wait for them*﴿ [Qur'ān 72:9], and, ﴾*Indeed, We have adorned the lowest heaven with the stars for decoration, and for protection from every rebellious devil. They cannot listen to the highest assembly of angels for they are pelted from every side, fiercely driven away. And they will suffer an everlasting torment. But whoever manages to stealthily eavesdrop is instantly pursued by a piercing flare*﴿ [Qur'ān 37:6-10].

A further objection in this context relates to what is meant by the 'lowest heaven'. It is asserted that the Qur'ān is saying that the stars are in the lowest heaven, while in reality the Qur'ān is stating the stars are an adornment for the lowest heaven; a totally different thing. This is because the seven heavens—distinct from paradise—lie outside of the cosmos and universe beyond space. Before reaching the first heaven, there are numerous stars in space that adorn the first heaven like a canopy covered in glitter, and what is behind

the canopy is described as being adorned by the glitter even though the actual glitter is not behind the canopy. Likewise, the observers of the first heaven—the first of seven concentric layers of creation—will find it adorned by stars whose beauty, if observed, lies far beyond the material universe that they observe.

A pertinent and interesting fact also is that there are indeed shooting stars and not solely meteorites. Mira, for example, is located 350 light-years from Earth in the constellation Cetus.

> The star, named Mira (pronounced *my-rah*) after the Latin word for 'wonderful', sheds material that will be recycled into new stars, planets and possibly even life. NASA's Galaxy Evolution Explorer discovered a long trail of material behind Mira during its survey of the entire sky in ultraviolet light.
>
> Like a boat traveling through water, a bow shock, or build-up of gas, forms ahead of the star in the direction of its motion. Gas in the bow shock is heated and then mixes with the cool hydrogen gas in the wind that is blowing off Mira. This heated hydrogen gas then flows around behind the star, forming a turbulent wake. Why does the trailing hydrogen gas glow in ultraviolet light? When it is heated, it transitions into a higher-energy state, which then loses energy by emitting ultraviolet light—a process known as fluorescence.[66]

Rather than crossing swords in their attempts to co-opt the meanings of the Qur'ān, whether to prove it miraculous by grafting every scientific theory onto its meanings, or simply distorting its meanings to make it sound anti-scientific, opposing groups should engage with the Qur'ān from within its pure Arabic lexicography which reveals its precise descrip-

tions. To take one example, ﴾*He is the One Who made the Sun a radiant source and the moon a reflected light, with precisely ordained phases, so that you may know the number of years and calculation of time. God did not create all this except for a purpose. He makes the signs clear for people of knowledge*﴿ [Qur'ān 10:5]. In this verse, the moon is described as *'nūr'* which means light. Objectors ask why contemporary Muslims distort the meaning to 'reflecting light' when the word means simply light, belying the Qur'ān, since we know the moon reflects light and has no light of its own. They contest that Muslims purposefully mistranslate it to graft science on to the Qur'ān, and that it also belies our earlier statement that the Qur'ān does not contradict what is empirical, since obviously the moon reflecting the light of the sun is empirically observed.

In response we can say that when we turn to the Qur'ān with honesty and integrity toward its linguistic meanings there are two points detractors fail to observe in this particular objection. The first is that the word *'nūr'* is a root word [*ism maṣdar*], and a root word in Arabic can be interpreted in both the active and the passive voice, so, in this case it can mean both giving and reflecting light. The second and most important point is that the Qur'ān explicitly mentions elsewhere that the moon reflects light, ﴾*Blessed is the One Who has placed constellations in the sky, as well as a radiant lamp and a luminous moon*﴿ [Qur'ān 25:61]. The word 'luminous' here is from the word *'munīra'* which means giving light not emanating from itself but reflecting light from another source. This is why the Qur'ān is understood to be and portrayed as being luminous and the Prophet himself ﷺ described as a luminous lamp; the light of guidance and the light of the Prophet ﷺ illuminate not from themselves but by God's will. The sun by contrast is described as a lamp in the

Qur'ān, but a burning lamp and not as '*munīr*', one reflecting light.

Another example of linguistics revealing a deeper meaning is the disputed word '*daḥā-hā*' in the verse, ﴾*And after that He spread the earth*﴿ [Qur'ān 79:30]. The word '*daḥā-hā*' or more specifically the verb '*daḥā*' without the pronoun '*hā*' has been translated as 'He spread' and also as 'He rounded'. It is the second meaning that critics of Islam take exception to, claiming that it does not have that meaning in Arabic as it is not found in Lane's 'Lexicon' or other renowned dictionaries. However, if they had checked with due diligence, they would have found '*daḥā*' to mean 'he rounded' in classical Arabic poetry, where the poet Ibn al-Rūmī says:

I will never forget the sight of a baker
who was flattening (yadḥū) the wafer.
By the time you see it a ball in his hand
and the time you see it like the moon
is as fast as the formation (tandāḥ) of a circle
on the surface of water when you throw a pebble[67].

In this poetry, Ibn al-Rūmī utilises the verb '*daḥā*' in the imperfect tense in both its meanings. In the first part as 'spread out' or 'prepared', and in the second part as 'formation of a circle'. Both meanings are found in this one word. Lane's 'Lexicon' has numerous meanings recorded for this one verb including:

> "He (God) made the earth wide, or ample; as explained by an Arab woman of the desert."[68]

And:

> "Also, said of an ostrich, he expanded, and made wide, with his foot, or leg, the place where he was about to deposit his eggs."[69]

The same is said for a man with a big round stomach as recorded in Lane's 'Lexicon':

> "The belly was or became, large, and hanging down; and it (the belly) was, or became, wide, or distended: both signify it (the belly) became swollen, or inflated, or big, and hung down, by reason of fatness or disease."[70]

The amazing aspect of this one word having multiple meanings meant that when a simple Bedouin reads the verse, he understands that the earth is liveable and smoothed out for him to the distance he observes in the desert and the areas he inhabits. Yet when the scientific person reads the same verse, he understands both the meaning of smoothed out, liveable earth and that of the rounded geoid planet Earth.

The above should draw our attention to the fact that the Qur'ān was not revealed as a book of science, science being the human endeavour to research and investigate the material realm. God has endowed humankind with the intellect and the perceptive faculties to discover the workings of nature and the material realm that surrounds humanity. Human beings have the ability to advance themselves through their own God-given capabilities but that was not the purpose of the revelation of the Qur'ān, as the human has the ability to advance himself through his own capabilities. This is one of

the many meanings of when God says, ﴾*Indeed, We have honoured the children of Ādam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged them far above many of Our creatures*﴿ [Qur'ān 17:70].

The Qur'ān and divine revelation unveil for humanity those realities that which cannot be known through human reasoning alone. God has given sufficient capacity for humanity to manipulate the atom, for instance. However, were these scientific realities a part of the divine revelation then mankind would not engage in research. If a person were asked regarding any scientific fact and he responded by referencing religious scripture, then all science would be defunct, and humanity would never proceed with its scientific discovery. The divine revelation, instead, guides humanity in those metaphysical realities beyond the scope of science, while humanity has sufficient means to progress itself in science, providing us with ethical and moral guidelines in how to utilise the technologies and conduct ethical research.

The proliferation and use of nuclear and other horrific weapons of mass destruction, the manipulation of nature and the hurting of other creatures are all outcomes of a morally unguided science. There is no possibility whatsoever that the Qur'ān contradicts that which is truly scientific or empirically known and observed by the human being. The rule of thumb is that if any verse of the Qur'ān is being manipulated in such a way then the interpretation is wrong, such as the earlier mention of the sun setting in a muddy lake. Additionally, science will always need moral and ethical guidance from a divine source in order that human beings do not manipulate nature, laws of nature, the material realm and other elements to harm the planet, creatures of God and themselves.

Another unqualified generalisation made today is that the Muslim world was making scientific advancements until Islamic fundamentalism turned the tide and it stagnated. This claim is ignorant of the historical development of Muslim civilisation. The advance of Islam, Qur'ānic syntax, morphology, rhetoric and exegesis, as well as Ḥadīth compilations, Islamic jurisprudence and the codification of Islamic law went hand in hand with scientific advances in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, architecture (in the Umayyad dynasty), literature, botany and many other fields. In fact, the most deeply religious and educated people and authorities lived during the same time of these scientific advancements in Baghdad, Damascus and other centres of learning in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia. Unsurprisingly, when the advancements in the religious sciences decreased and the age of the critical method of Ḥadīth compilations, hermeneutics, exegesis, and literature was over, so too started the scientific decline. Other factors adding to the decline were the Crusades, the Mongol sacking of Baghdad in 1258 CE, the pirating crusades from Europe and subsequent colonisation, post-colonial secular and later nationalist governments that took no interest in funding science. The post-Ottoman, Sykes-Picot new Middle East encouraged retrogressive despot nationalist regimes and the establishment of 'Israel' provoked an incessant destabilisation of the region through war and invasions.

During the Mughal rule of India, the education of a scholar included morphology, syntax, rhetoric, logic, philosophy, legal theory, jurisprudence, Arabic, Persian, Ḥadīth literature, classical Arabic and Persian literature, rational theology, astronomy, medicine, Euclidean geometry, algebra and pure mathematics, as well as botany and of course Qur'ānic exegesis. This was alongside memorising the entire Qur'ān with its canonical modes of recitation and thousands of Ḥadīth, lines

of poetry, Ṣūfī aphorisms and legal maxims. After the British left India, the GDP had been reduced to four percent of the world's economy, after having been around twenty-five percent during Muslim rule. The entire infrastructure was left dilapidated (except railways and the communications Britain needed for its military and trade) and institutions were destroyed. Scholars and clerics were no longer subsidised by the Mughal Emperors and subsequently the profession was demoted to rote learning with no originality. It is little wonder that today, countries like Pakistan, once a part of colonial India, have inherent issues with radicalisation and a clergy divorced from understanding both the secular and the scientific worlds.

The early period of scientific advancement was encouraged and impelled by the essential requirements of religious worship, like the geographical direction of Makkah and the scientific engineering involved in determining its direction, or the staggering spherical trigonometry used in astronomy and needed for prayer times, calculating the lunar calendar and seasonal stargazing for farming and weather forecasts. The scientific advancements by Muslims, who are today wantonly classified as 'fundamentalists' or 'fanatical', were made because the religion of Islam invited enquiry, containing as it does, no inherent opposition to scientific and material progression.

In the early period of the Islamic caliphate (a caliphate that lasted thirteen hundred years), the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd sent gifts to the Holy Roman emperor Charlemagne with a mechanical clock powered by water in 807 CE. At noon a weight dropped, bells sounded, and twelve brass horsemen emerged from twelve windows.

Voltaire (1694 - 1778 CE) describing this clock, said:

"Hārūn al-Rashīd's striking clock gift to Charlemagne was regarded as a wonder. Regarding cognitive philosophy, sound philosophy, physics, astronomy and principles of medicine, how could they have been known (to Muslim civilisation), these had only just been known to us?"[71]

5.9 CLAIMS OF SCIENTIFIC ERROR IN PROPHETIC REPORTS

The following is a cursory analysis of some of the apparently unscientific prophetic reports:

The Prostrating Sun

The verb 'to prostrate' is stated for inanimate objects in the Qur'ān and some prophetic reports. Mistaking this for human-like prostration, sceptics point out the apparent absurdity of inanimate objects prostrating like human beings. The error for this reasoning lies in such an understanding of prostration.

Traditionally, the response to this misunderstanding has been to point out two key features that have been overlooked. The first is that the verses of the Qur'ān or any prophetic report mentioning prostration are in fact pointing out the fact that everything in creation—including inanimate objects or any existent in nature like trees—are subdued and under the divine authority submitting without a will of their own, except uniquely, that of humans to whom God has given a will to make that choice. The second important factor is that when an inanimate object 'prostrates' it does so in accordance with its own anatomy and physical make up, meaning that if you observe a tree 'prostrate', for example, it would mean that it 'prostrates' according to its own physical features.

The error made by anyone objecting to these types of verses or prophetic reports is in thinking that they must observe a tree bend down like the way a human being does in prostration, when in reality the prostration of the inanimate object may not even be noticeable such is the very subtle nature of that object. When a prophetic report states that the sun prostrates, it does not mean the sun is prostrating by bending itself the way a human does while prostrating, nor even that it is discernible to the human eye, rather it means that the sun is under the authority of God and only functions subject to His divine authority at all times.

One of the prophetic reports mentions that the sun prostrates under the firmament below the throne before rising at the next location. Some detractors take from this statement of the Ḥadīth that it means the sun moves from its location and prostrates under the firmament under the throne and then returns to its place. It should be noted that the meaning of throne here is not an anthropomorphism for God, but a creation that is believed to exist beyond the firmament and in the metaphysical realm. Because the sun is already located underneath the firmament, and the firmament is under the throne, there is no need for the sun to move. So the meaning could be stated in the following way: at each moment the sun is under the authority of God and only functions due to His divine power and authority, and the meaning of the sun prostrating under the throne is that the sun is subdued, submissive and is always under the firmament which is under the throne. Clearly, the Ḥadīth does not entail a physical travelling of the sun at given intervals to underneath the throne before returning to rise. Indeed the meaning of throne is not a chair in the conventional sense, in fact it is a reference to a creation of light which surrounds the cosmos. This throne is taken from the Arabic '*ʿarsh*' which in English some translate as throne,

but in reality is indefinable. Lane's 'Lexicon' states:

> "*ʿArsh* is applied to the Throne of God, which is not definable."[72]

It also states:

> "The *ʿArsh* is immeasurable, and it is said in the *Mufradāt* of Al-Rāghib that the Throne of God is one of the things which mankind knows not in reality, but only by name; and it is not as the imaginations of the vulgar hold it to be; [namely, the throne of God;] for if it were it so, it would be a support to Him; not supported; whereas God saith [in the Qurʾān 35:39], ﴾*Verily God holdeth the heavens and the earth, lest they should move from their place; and if they should move from their place, no one would hold them after Him*﴿, or, as some say, it is the highest sphere; (or the empyrean)."[73]

The following is one variant of the prostrating sun Ḥadīth with commentary in the brackets to ease and facilitate the correct understanding:

> On the authority of Abū Dharr, who said: "The Prophet ﷺ asked me at sunset, 'Do you know where the sun goes?' I replied, 'God and His Messenger know better.' He said, 'It goes (meaning, it disappears from view after sunset) that it prostrates (meaning, it has submitted to the divine authority and a prostration befitting its anatomy that is not discernible to the human) itself underneath the throne (meaning, it is under the firmament which is under the throne) and takes the permission to rise again (to continue its function). Once it is permitted, (a time will come when) it will be about to prostrate itself but its prostration will not be accepted, and it

> will ask permission to continue its course (its usual function) but it will not be permitted, rather it will be ordered to resume its state as it was and so it will rise in the West (this is in reference to a sign of the Day of Judgement that presents the ultimate challenge to the world and will close the doors of repentance when it occurs). That is the interpretation of the Statement of God: ﴾*And the sun is quickly proceeding towards its destination. That is the designing of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing*﴿ [Qur'ān 36:38].'"[74]

A note on the anti-clockwise orbit—from the Northern hemisphere perspective and clockwise from the Southern hemisphere perspective; if the Earth did change its orbit and the sun rose from the West it would cause the Coriolis effect. According to Islamic eschatology and Ḥadīth on the subject of the sun rising from the West, this event will occur toward the end of time and the night before its actual occurrence will be very long. A magnetic polar shift, however, has occurred numerous times in history, the last one being approximately 780,000 years ago. The earth waits another and possibly impending polar shift to change the human definition of the cardinal directions.

This particular variant of the Ḥadīth is in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. In one version related by Abū Dāwūd, none of the points relating to the sun's prostration and it's doing so underneath the throne are mentioned, but rather that the sun sets in a 'hot spring' and in another reading, as we have seen, 'a muddy spring'. Besides critiquing the authenticity and acceptability of this narration, some of the commentators have mentioned that this statement is in reference to the point of view of someone observing the horizon. Indeed, it is stated in reference to a story mentioned in the Qur'ān about the ancient king (as mentioned above)—as Abū Dāwūd placed

this Ḥadīth in a chapter relating to Qur'ān commentary—and therefore this is not literal.

Embryology

Objections to the reported development of the foetus in Ḥadīth literature revolve around the following narration:

> ʿAbd Allah b. Masʿūd ﷺ said, "The Messenger of God ﷺ—who is the truthful, the trustworthy—related to us, 'Indeed, the creation of one of you is brought together in his mother's belly for forty days in the form of a zygote, then he is a clinging clot for a like period, then a morsel of flesh for a like period, then there is sent to him the angel who blows the soul into him and is commanded about four matters: to write down his provision, his life span, his actions, and whether he will be unhappy or happy. By God, other than whom there is no deity, indeed, one of you does the deeds of the people of Paradise until there is not between him and it except an arm's length, but the decree overtakes him so he does the deeds of the people of the Fire and enters it. Indeed, one of you does the deeds of the people of the Fire until there is not between him and it except an arm's length, but the decree overtakes him, so he does the deeds of the people of Paradise and enters it.'"[75]

The chief objection relates to the stated time span of forty days and what occurs every forty days after that, since it is now known that the development of the embryo is more advanced than that mentioned in this particular Ḥadīth. The problem only occurs, however, if someone takes this Ḥadīth in isolation without reference to other narrations on the same subject, the rule being that a single verse of the Qur'ān cannot be understood without cross checking other relevant verses

and Ḥadīth on the subject, and vice versa.

Another Ḥadīth on the subject:

> On the authority of Hudhayfa b. Usayd ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ said, "After the sperm-and-ovum drop [*nuṭfa*] has been (in the uterus) forty-two days, God sends it an angel that gives it form and fashions its hearing, sight, skin, flesh, and skeleton."[76]

This second Ḥadīth clarifies the previous Ḥadīth and is in accordance with embryological observance, and it is around this time that the semblance of essential organs, sensory organs and grown bone tissue become visible. This is also the crucial period when the gender is determined a point clearly made in another Ḥadīth:

> The Prophet ﷺ said, "The sperm-and-ovum drop falls into the uterus (and remains) for forty nights, after which the angel in charge of fashioning it descends upon it and says, 'Lord! Male or female?' Then Allah makes it male or female."[77]

Hudhayfa, who narrated the previous Ḥadīth narrated another variant of it:

> "The angel is sent to the sperm-and-ovum drop after it has settled in the uterus for forty or forty-five nights and says, 'Lord! Is it to be wretched or happy?' Then this is inscribed. Then he says, 'Lord! Is it to be male or female?' Then this is inscribed, together with its deeds, its progeny, its term of life, and its sustenance. Then the records are folded up and nothing more is added nor subtracted."[78]

Someone reading the first Ḥadīth in isolation may gain the impression that the three stages of being 'a zygote', 'a clinging clot', and 'a morsel of flesh' all occur in three separate forty day periods, when in reality it means that these three initial stages occur within the same period, further clarified by yet another Ḥadīth:

> Anas ﵁ relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God has appointed an angel over the uterus who says, 'Lord! It is now a sperm-and-ovum drop [*nuṭfa*]. Lord! It is now a thing that clings [*ʿalaqa*]. Lord! It is now a thing like chewed flesh [*mudgha*].' Then, when he wants to complete its fashioning, he asks, 'Male or female? Happy or wretched? What is his share of sustenance? What is his term of life?' All this is inscribed (as it is) in his mother's belly."[79]

If we combine this Ḥadīth with the former which mentions that gender is determined at forty or forty five days, it becomes clear that the three stages of 'zygote or sperm-and-ovum drop', 'that which clings or a clinging clot', and 'chewed flesh' all occur before the forty days. That is what is meant by the first Ḥadīth cited in the beginning of this discussion when it says, 'for a like period' it would mean within that same period, as the Arabic is '*mithla dhālik*' which means 'like that'.

In conclusion, we would say that the three terms utilised in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth regarding embryology would translate in the following way: The *nuṭfa* as zygote/morula, then the second stage of *ʿalaqa* as blastocyst/embryo, and the third stage of *mudgha* as foetus. All these changes occur within the first forty days as attested by other narrations and observable empirical science.

Sixty Foot Humans

A Ḥadīth, transmitted by al-Bukhārī, goes as follows:

> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "God created Ādam, making him sixty cubits tall. When He created him, He said to him, 'Go and greet that group of angels, and listen to their reply, for it will be your greeting and the greeting of your offspring.' So, Ādam said, 'Peace be upon you'. The angels said, 'Peace and God's mercy be upon you'. Thus, the angels added to Adam's salutation the expression, 'God's mercy.' Any person who enters Paradise will resemble Ādam. People have been decreasing in stature since Ādam's creation."[80]

The two anomalies pointed to by detractors are firstly the purported height of Ādam ﷺ and the ultimate sentence of the narration, 'People have been decreasing in stature since Ādam's creation.' Where are the human remains or archaeological evidence to warrant this?

One of the most authoritative commentators on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn Ḥajar, cites Ibn al-Tīn as saying the end sentence poses a difficulty as the archaeological dwellings of ancient people show that they were as tall as modern humans, the time span between those ancient civilisations and Ādam ﷺ being shorter than the timespan between modern man (in the time of Ibn al-Tīn) and those ancient civilisations[81]. This problem posed by this Ḥadīth, are the relative size of Ādam, and that of ancient man, with no empirical evidence for either. Of course, the lack of empirical evidence does not disprove anything and the entire narration can be relegated to the category of non-empirical claims awaiting empirical proof, as well as Ibn al-Tīn's statement not taking into account the relatively recent discovery of man inhabiting this

planet for not just thousands but hundreds of thousands of years. One article reads:

> "Newly discovered fossil discoveries in Africa have pushed back the age we know modern humans roamed the Earth by roughly 100,000 years—and injected profound doubt into what we thought we knew about where humanity first arose. 'This material represents the very roots of our species—the oldest Homo sapiens ever found in Africa or elsewhere,' said Jean-Jacques Hublin, an anthropologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, in a press conference this week. Hublin was the lead researcher for one of the two studies published on the discoveries in yesterday's issue of the journal *Nature*. Up until now, the oldest definitive modern human fossils were known to be around 200,000 years old and found in modern-day Ethiopia. These discoveries helped cement the dominant theory among anthropologists in recent decades that modern humans, Homo sapiens, evolved in East Africa and then migrated north into Asia and Europe. This region has therefore been dubbed the 'cradle of humankind' (though South Africa also lays claim to the title). 'Our results challenge this picture in many ways,' Hublin said. The fossils his team studied come from a cave in central Morocco, thousands of miles away from East Africa. They suggest that, by 300,000 years ago, modern humans had already spread across Africa. Recall that the continent that was much easier to cross then, with lush grasslands and lakes residing where the forbidding Sahara Desert lies today."[82]

Despite the many gaps and the ever-changing science relating to human origins and history, an even simpler explanation for this Ḥadīth is readily available. The height of Ādam ﷺ referred to in the Ḥadīth may well be his height in Paradise before being sent onto Earth. Not taking this narration in

isolation is important. Ibn ʿAbbās states in a narration that it was the height of Ādam ﷺ prior to being placed on this Earth, as cited in *ʿUmdat al-Qārī*, another authoritative commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The meaning of the end sentence 'and the creation never ceased to decrease until now' correspondingly is not a reference to height but a reference to the immense beauty that Ādam ﷺ was created with and which never ceased to diminish. Such a view that humans decreased in beauty from the origins of Ādam ﷺ in Paradise is stated by al-Qasṭalānī in *Irshād al-Sārī* (another commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*) and exemplified by the next Ḥadīth which states:

> "The first group of people who will enter Paradise, will be shining [...] All of them will have one form and will resemble their father Ādam, who was sixty cubits in heaven."[83]

Dipping the Fly

The Ḥadīth under scrutiny here is:

> The Prophet ﷺ said, "If a fly falls into one of your containers (of food or drink), immerse it completely before removing it, for under one of its wings there is venom and under another there is its antidote."[84]

Classically, predating todays modern science, this is how Ibn Ḥajar comments on this Ḥadīth:

> "I found nothing among the variants to pinpoint the wing that carries the antidote but one of the scholars said he observed that the fly protects itself with its left wing so it can

> be deduced that the right one is the one with the antidote [...] Another said that the poison may be that of pride occurring in one's soul causing him to disdain eating that food or avoid and discard it altogether, while the antidote takes place by subduing the soul and forcing it to be humble."[85]

The command denotes permissibility, not a literal obligation. Al-Qasṭalānī says: "The command (of immersing the fly) denotes counsel so as to counter disease with cure."[86]

The context of the Ḥadīth should be kept in mind given that it was said in 7TH Century Arabia, in an environment where throwing away food and drink was not the easy option that it is today in the developed world. In fact, there are many parts of the world today that face this harsh reality where throwing away food is not an option due to the scarcity of food and drink, and in the case of a household fly they would not have the option of discarding the food. The Ḥadīth does not negate that the fly can potentially carry other types of diseases but what has been found is that the household fly (*Musca domestica*) does have antimicrobial properties which some scientists have utilised for food preservation[87], and it is this single property that is being specified in the Ḥadīth in the context of the harsh Arabian environment with food and water scarcity[88].

5.10 FORGERIES & ISLAM

The previous discussions on Qur'ānic verses, prophetic reports and science are related to what is deemed authentic and reliably transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ. But sometimes Islamophobes and detractors will cite spurious material as credi-

ble, even taking from the works of reliable scholars who may have been quoting the questionable reports for academic reasons. Examples of these apocryphal reports may be ascribed to companions of the Prophet ﷺ and cited for academic purposes only. Two examples may be given:

> "Allah swears by the *Nūn*, which is the whale that carries the earth on its back while in Water, and beneath which is the Bull, and under the Bull is the Rock, and under the Rock is the Dust, and none knows what is under the Dust save Allah."

This report is ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās, the cousin of the Prophet ﷺ in a work which is unreliable as a whole, and written centuries after Ibn ʿAbbās. It was ascribed to him with the title *'Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās'*.

The second example is the report:

> "[Allah] created the Earth upon a (big) fish [*ḥūt*], that being the fish [*nūn*] mentioned by God in the Qurʾān: ﴾*Nūn. By the Pen.*﴿ The fish was in the water. The water was upon the back of a (small) rock. The rock was upon the back of an angel. The angel was upon a (big) rock."

The source of this is 'The History of al-Ṭabarī' and belongs to a category which falls into the genre of Ḥadīth forgeries [*mawḍūʿāt*]. These and other prophetic reports atheists will tend to quote—both authentic Ḥadīth, like those examined earlier, and those which fall into a category beyond human ability to investigate. Muslims are not necessarily obliged to explain the latter as they do not fall within the domain of sci-

entific investigation. Ḥadīth relating to the angels, the Jinn, the heavens, Paradise, Hell, the unseen realm, and other creations beyond the physical material world, are all accepted by Muslims since they neither contradict the science of this empirical world nor contradict rational judgement as elaborated upon in Chapter Two on Epistemology.

5.11 ESCHATOLOGY IN ISLAM

Some Ḥadīth relating to eschatology may be construed as being anti-science by people who take only a cursory reading of these prophetic reports and yet treat them absolutely literally. The golden rule to understanding Ḥadīth reports on eschatology and signs of the Day of Judgement is, once the sign has occurred the meaning will be absolutely clear and conversely, before the sign occurs whatever interpretation is given can be mistaken.

Let's have a glance at two prophetic reports that elucidate this golden rule. The first report is:

> The Prophet ﷺ informed his wives, "The first one to die from amongst you and be with me is the one who has the longest hand."[89]

This Ḥadīth relates to the passing away of the Prophet ﷺ and the first wife who will die after him. ʿĀ'isha ؓ, one of the wives, states that they understood this statement literally so that the wives measured their hands against each other's on the wall when they heard this statement. ʿĀ'isha ؓ relates:

> "Some of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ asked him, 'Who amongst us will be the first to follow you?' He said, 'Whoever has the longest hand.' So, they started measuring their hands with a stick and Sawda's hand turned out to be the longest. When Zaynab b. Jaḥsh ﷺ, in the caliphate of ʿUmar ﷺ, died first of all, we came to know that the long hand was a symbol for practicing charity, so she was the first to follow the Prophet ﷺ as she used to love to practice charity." (Sawda ﷺ died later in the caliphate of Muʿāwiya ﷺ).[90]

The second Ḥadīth that exemplifies this rule is the Ḥadīth that toward the end of time, when a man leaves the house, his shoe lace, or walking stick, or whip—and in some narrations, his thigh—will inform him of what his family does while he is away. This confounded earlier generations who gave various types of interpretations. The report is:

> Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ﷺ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "By the One in Whose grasp is my soul! The Hour will not be established until predators speak to people and until the tip of a man's whip and the straps on his sandal speak to him, and his thigh informs him of what occurred with his family after he left."[91]

Today Muslims, almost unanimously, understand this to be a prophecy regarding modern technology and recording devices. The predators speaking to people have now been interpreted as being guide dogs, or those trained by the police along with other animals like chimpanzees that can communicate with humans through training.

This rule of waiting for the sign to occur to know its true interpretation applies to signs like the box thorn tree talking of when the Muslims would have a great war with 'Israel',

or the Dajjāl (the Anti-Christ) riding a flying donkey that many have said is the aeroplane, or the location of the barrier of Gog and Magog and how they survive to this day. Up until recently in this day and age of space discovery, humans have made gross errors on maps evidenced by the placing of huge islands on maps that do not exist[92], or sometimes there are missing millions who are not on maps[93], or there are mysterious, poorly charted places everywhere[94].

One oft-cited report in al-Bukhārī that is a source of contention and mockery is the report where a companion of the Prophet ﷺ makes an observation that he saw a group of monkeys stoning another monkey for adultery. The narration is:

> Narrated ʿAmr b. Maymūn ؓ, "During the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance I saw a she-monkey surrounded by a number of monkeys. They were all stoning it, because it had committed illegal sexual intercourse. I too, stoned it along with them."[95]

There are a few observations regarding this narration. Firstly, it is not a prophetic report. Secondly, it is the observation and experience of a companion prior to when he was a Muslim which he is relating in an anecdotal fashion. Thirdly, it has no relation to Islamic belief and there are many such type of stories in books that can be scrutinised and rejected. Fourthly, if any report from a single narrator is ascribed to the Prophet ﷺ, it can be scrutinised and textually critiqued through the scholarship of Ḥadīth criticism as is done for Ḥadīth commentaries, so that such anecdotal reports will be subjected to much more rigorous criticism. Finally, even though Muslims may read this story and not take it as a point of belief, is it not strange that the New Atheist should mock Muslims for

a report mentioned for anecdotal purposes and not part of their belief system, while the New Atheist believes in the common descent of humans with apes and sometimes to endorse homosexuality says 'it is found in nature and even animals do it'? The point here being that the observation that certain things are found in nature is a subjective observation made by atheists as well as others, and the companion reporting his observation of stoning was simply giving his observation of such occurrences in nature even though he may have been mistaken. Ultimately though, his observation is not binding upon Muslims as a tenet of faith or as legislation.

5.12 THE ILLUSION OF SCIENTIFIC DOGMATISM

New Atheists, as with many religiously bigoted people, are often bound by dogmatic claims that cannot really be substantiated with any certainty. Claims that need to be re-investigated with a critical and rigorous scientific method.

'Promissory Materialism', to use Karl Popper's phrase, is the dogmatic atheist's dream that science will unravel everything, including consciousness and the human soul. This kind of dogmatism sees everything functioning like a machine including the human mind and soul, seen as just biological robots themselves programmed by genetics, meaning everything including humans are just matter with no real consciousness with the human experience just the result of chemical reactions with no real meaning. Life has no real goal, it just is what it is; the interplay of material which interacts in accordance with laws of nature that are fixed and immutable.

According to atheist materialism, everything we know is material, meaning that once we die everything corrodes and

there is no remnant of a human soul. In fact, the human is a soulless machine that only carries material DNA to replicate through material processes, which would render love into purely chemical reactions. Language and thinking are merely the by-product of millions of years of evolution, even though humans are the only fortunate animals to have developed speech, language, writing, reading, mathematics, abstraction, reasoning, logic, inventory skills, ethics, morality, appreciation of beauty, art, music, poetry, and philosophising. This New Atheist dogmatism forces the idea that there is no reality beyond the material world and together with the denial of any afterlife amounts to a form of creed, not science.

5.13 PARADIGM SHIFTS IN SCIENTIFIC THEORIES

Science is subject to re-orientation through paradigm change, where the same data is handled in a different manner or observed in a new context. Two scientists may interpret the same data differently, neither being incorrect. An investigator querying atomic theory and whether a single atom of helium was or was not a molecule might hear from a chemist that an atom of helium was a molecule because it behaved like one with respect to the kinetic theory of gases. From the physicist, on the other hand, he might hear that the helium atom was not a molecule because it did not display any molecular spectrum. Because of how they interpreted the data, the same atom gave the specialists two different answers.

An existing paradigm that is taken as a foundation for problem solving may not always necessarily resolve problems, and when it does not, it may reach a crisis point when a new paradigm is needed. The few scientific theories without such inadequacies remain useful scientific tools. If such a paradigm

shift were not a reality pertaining to scientific theories and seemed unchallengeable at some points in history, it would mean that no scientific theory could face a counter-instance or that all scientific theories face a counter-instance at all times.

A new paradigm creates a crisis for the previous paradigm from which it may have sprung. At times, as mentioned, more than one hypothetical construct can be used to interpret a given collection of data but as long as the most prominent paradigm fulfils its role as a puzzle solver and a tool for scientists, it remains as the mainstream hypothesis until it reaches a crisis point through not being able to resolve so many problems.

Abandoning one paradigm without adopting another is counterintuitive to the spirit of science, yet, at the same time, any type of research must always have counter-instances. Certain scientific theories are seen as whole conceptual explaining schema and often touted as absolutely certain and not probabilistic hypotheses. As such, falsification is never acknowledged and the high improbability of many segments of such a theory never entertained, that is until the crisis in such a theory reaches a threshold at which point a revolution and a new paradigm is essential.

Darwinian evolution theory falls into this category of scientific theory. Karl Popper too, incidentally, denied any verification procedures at all and instead emphasised the importance of falsification, which amounts to the fact that if the outcome of any test is negative it would entail the rejection of the entire theory.

5.14 EVOLUTION/INTELLIGENT DESIGN & ISLAM

Intelligent design, as far as rational theology would view it, is not seen as a scientific theory and is no alternative to real science. This is because intelligent design is viewed in the same way as the world and the sentient beings within it; namely, as signposts to an intelligent design—it cannot be viewed as science. This is despite the efforts of the discredited cult leader Adnan Oktar who wrote under the pen name of 'Harun Yahya'. Oktar, neither a theologian nor a cleric in the traditional sense, presented many strange and aberrant views, which have been totally discredited amongst theologians and Muslim academia. It appears that Oktar's work was mainly inspired by the more original Discovery Institute.

In the same way that some religious people enter the science field with a pre-set idea of positing God in the scientific research, atheists too enter scientific research in order to disprove the role of God. One such was Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, who wanted to increase the importance of nature and reduce the role of God. Recognising the difficulty of impartiality for some scientists, he was nevertheless hopeful when he said, "But I look with confidence to the future, to young and rising naturalists, who will be able to view both sides of the question with impartiality."[96] Reputation and bias always play a role, and like in other endeavours, they also play a role in scientific circles. The story of Lord Rayleigh is an interesting example of how reputation, in this case, can influence scientific academia. Lord Rayleigh once submitted a paper to the British Association on some electrodynamics paradoxes. On sending the paper, the name was inadvertently removed with the result that the paper was rejected as the work of some 'paradoxer'. When the paper

was resubmitted with the full name it was accepted with profuse apologies.

Scientific research, and in particular evolutionary research, as viewed by the *Kalām* methodology falls under the classification of empirical judgements, judgements that relate to the material realm and its integrated complexity and correlational uniformity. A poor conceptual understanding of evolutionary principles leads to unwarranted criticisms from Muslim theologians. Historically, the theory was linked to socialism and atheism which were creeping into educated circles during the colonial and post-colonial era, especially amongst people educated in the West.

Islam, on the other hand, posits all evolution theory in the neutral zone of scientific theory with the sole exception of human origins which have been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'ān, decisively alluded to and are unequivocal in their import. If a conscious judgement regarding any scientific theory is passed, it would fall into one of the following three categories:

1. That which is known by certainty (the category discussed earlier of incontestable facts that the Qur'ān cannot contradict);
2. That which cannot be true at all, and;
3. That which is possible.

Absolute certainty is attained from sound sense perceptions, mass transmitted facts, or the rational judgement of the mind, otherwise it will be an inductive argument based on given data and will always carry the possibility of doubt. It is this

latter inductive process that Darwinian evolution theory belongs to. While the theory in general, and the theory of human origins specifically, remain within the category of the rationally possible it does not convey absolute certainty since it is never empirically observed nor is it mass transmitted by people who have perceived it with their senses. If the types of proof brought forward to argue human origins do not reach the level of certainty attained in sciences, such as in engineering for instance, then it is not categorised as near certainty. The Qur'ān declares human origins to be from soil and not from lower primates and common ancestors with chimpanzees. That latter conclusion remains part of a scientific hypothesis that falls well into the uncertainty domain.

The more that experts on human evolution claim to know about our origins, the less it seems they actually understand. Darwinian evolutionary theory does not reach the point where rejection of the specific aspect of the origin of the human species can be deemed as unscientific and illogical as New Atheists claim belligerently. Indeed, much of evolutionary theory can be seen as an inductive science. To forcefully jam it down the throats of those who deem it extremely unlikely, or just possible, or anything less than absolute certainty, is to mirror the religious fundamentalists who display a similar intolerant behaviour to dissidents.

Darwinian evolutionary theory is not a proof in itself but an interpretation, a hypothesis, an explanation that many neutral scientists see as the best explanation of the fossil record amongst competing theories. But this does not at all entail absolute certainty or even near certainty regarding human origins. In fact, there are times when scientists get carried away with new fossil discoveries and then get it absolutely wrong, which they then amend, which is fine, as that is what science is about.

Examples of this revisionist approach to human origins are abundant. A fairly recent example is when Homo naledi was found in South Africa. Scientists rushed to say Homo naledi lived three million years ago, the longer time frame needed to allow the possibility of incremental changes that allow gradual Darwinian evolution of one species to another, the type of change that you see if flicking pictures on a pack of cards that show slow and gradual change. An article from the BBC states:

> "A primitive type of human, once thought to be up to three million years old, actually lived much more recently, a study suggests. The remains of 15 partial skeletons belonging to the species Homo naledi were described in 2015."[97]

Further down it states:

> "Although its anatomy shares some similarities with modern people, other anatomical features of Homo naledi hark back to humans that lived in much earlier times—some two million years ago or more."

The anatomical features are not really mentioned, but it could very well be that these various categorisations of human finds could just be different races of the human species that differ in anatomical features, like the Pygmies or the Aborigines for instance in the modern world. However, the theory of evolution presses on with its contention with ancient orangutans and other ape creatures being given Latin names and branded as ancestors in order to fit the current hypothesis of human origin. This is compounded with drawings of ancient

ancestors in children's textbooks and museum models, even though such depictions are figments of someone's imagination. A National Geographic article states:

> "Although its anatomy shares some similarities with modern people, other anatomical features of Homo naledi hark back to humans that lived in much earlier times—some two million years ago or more. 'These look like a primitive form of our own genus—Homo. It looks like it might be connected to early Homo erectus, or Homo habilis, Homo rudolfensis,' said Prof Berger's colleague, John Hawks, from the University of Wisconsin. Although some experts guessed that naledi could had lived relatively recently, in 2015, Prof Berger told BBC News that the remains could be up to three million years old. New dating evidence places the species in a time period where Homo naledi could have overlapped with early examples of our own kind, Homo sapiens.
>
> Prof Hawks told the BBC's Inside Science radio programme: 'They're the age of Neanderthals in Europe, they're the age of Denisovans in Asia, they're the age of early modern humans in Africa. They're part of the diversity in the world that was there as our species was originating.'"[98]

All these high-flown names—like the Neanderthals for instance—were they not just ancient humans? We now know that the Neanderthal genome lives on in modern humans.

Sometimes scientists reconstruct an entire hypothesis from small fragments; the National Geographic quotes:

> "DNA hints at Other Mystery Humans; [...] both teams are now planning to apply their methods to other hominids like the Denisovans—an enigmatic group whose presence in Asia some 40,000 years ago is *known just from DNA from a*

> *finger bone and some teeth found in a single cave in Russia.*"

Recently, scientists discovered a bone and thought it a flute made by Neanderthals.

> "The Divje Babe artefact dates back to Neanderthal times, and the National Museum of Slovenia describes it as a 'Neanderthal flute'. There are several others like it, but the study observes that many of these do not actually date back to Neanderthal times."[99]

In fact, similar types of bones were also found that were dated as being post-Neanderthal. It turns out that most scientists now say it, and similar types of bones, are not flutes but rather chewed bones with hyena teeth marks! One article states the following:

> "'These are not instruments, nor human made, but products of the most important cave bear scavengers of Europe, hyenas,' Dr Diedrich wrote. 'Hyenas left bones with repeating similar tooth mark and crush damage stages, demonstrating a butchering/bone cracking strategy. Hyenas produced round-oval puncture marks in cub femora only by the bone-crushing premolar teeth of both upper and lower jaw.'"[100]

Such types of Darwinian evolutionary research amount to no more than probabilistic accounts for scientists and in no way can be conceived as factual. The following transcript of a debate that took place in Manchester University between the author and the New Atheist candidate David Milne—who

attempted to corner his interlocutor on human evolution—elucidates the fact that something probabilistic is being conceived as factual by evolution theory fundamentalists:

DAVID MILNE: Good evening everybody. My name is David Milne. I am a member of the Greater Manchester Humanists. I visit schools, talk about humans and what we represent and so on and so forth. So, before I go on, here I am going to be very much shorter because I think you all need me to be honest with you. So, I thought maybe some audience participation might be interesting at this point. So, I am going to ask you by a show of hands who accepts the theory of evolution in its whole? (Some audience members put their hands up) Excellent. Ok.

ASRAR RASHID: Not everybody.

DAVID MILNE: Yes, but about half the hall. From the people that raised your hands can I ask you to put your hands up if you are a Muslim? So, can you put your hands up so I can see?

ASRAR RASHID: Very few. So, David, that would show you [...]

DAVID MILNE: Very few yeah.

ASRAR RASHID: Your point wasn't proven there.

DAVID MILNE: Yeah.

ASRAR RASHID: I think you were trying to say that Muslims are mainly the people who reject evolution but the people who put their hands up as being Muslim were less than the people who put their hands up saying they reject the theory of evolution.

DAVID MILNE: No. I asked them whether they accepted it. But I didn't ask them if they rejected it.

ASRAR RASHID: Meaning whether they are agnostics regarding evolution?

DAVID MILNE: So, I wanted to ask you the question and I suppose I can ask it of everybody, you can all get involved as you have been sitting here listening to old people talking.

ASRAR RASHID: Old people David...?

DAVID MILNE: Well I refer to myself.

ASRAR RASHID: I've got a beard.

DAVID MILNE: I give you that, but if you shave the beard off... (Audience giggles). Given that the great universities and the great natural history museums of the world all teach evolution by means of natural selection. Given that the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England and indeed I would say many Muslims also accept evolution by means of natural selection, is it not the case that your opposition to evolution is because of the fact that you do not have any scientific evidence for the existence of Allah?

ASRAR RASHID: Thanks for your question David. Firstly, you've really discredited your question by mentioning the Catholic Church because if we are going to discuss rationally that would entail that whatever the Catholic Church agrees upon would be understood to be somewhat scientific. We know that the Catholic Church takes certain theological positions that are totally irrational. Like we mentioned one theological position regarding children going to Hell. As for, you mentioned, the great universities and natural history museums of the world, when you say 'of the world' would that be of Europe and America, or would that include Africa, Asia and the rest of the world?

DAVID MILNE: Well, very good question.

ASRAR RASHID: Because the world is much larger than London and its Natural History Museum.

DAVID MILNE: It is yes, absolutely. But, pretty much all countries, all over the world accept and teach evolution by means of natural selection.

ASRAR RASHID: You said the entire world. Would that mean in the Middle East and Africa, would the universities and

museums there accept that, meaning is there a universal world wide consensus or would you say there is...

DAVID MILNE: I think I would say universal, yes, indeed.

ASRAR RASHID: Because for me, for instance, the Qarawiyyīn is the oldest university in the world. Have you heard of the Qarawiyyīn?

DAVID MILNE: No.

ASRAR RASHID: It is the oldest university in the world. Did you know that? Twelve hundred years old.

GUY OTTEN (DAVID'S CO-DEBATER): I thought it was Al-Azhar?

ASRAR RASHID: No, Al-Azhar came after. Al-Azhar is eight hundred years old. In fact, it was established by the Fatimid dynasty and then Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī made it into a more established university. But prior to that Fāṭima Fihriyya established the oldest university in the world which is still active today, which is in Fez, and it's a university where they do not teach the theory of evolution. So, when you say the great universities of the world can you please qualify that? You mean Oxford, Cambridge, what other, Columbia university...?

DAVID MILNE: German universities, French universities, Chinese universities.

ASRAR RASHID: Chinese communist universities... meaning, when we say with regard to China. If you noticed I didn't mention China because China would not permit any university to not teach evolution or anything that goes against evolution. So, I would exclude China due to its Communist regime.

DAVID MILNE: Yes, but you exclude it, yet they actually teach evolution by means of natural selection and that is a fact. But my question was, 'Isn't it true that your opposition to evolution is because of the fact that you don't actually have any scientific evidence for the existence of your God?'

ASRAR RASHID: I am going to answer your question. The second part of your question implies that my rejection of evolution theory is due to the fact that I cannot scientifically prove the existence of Allah? My answer will be two pronged, I will give two answers. One is that the theory of evolution, even if I acknowledged that theory, would not entail rejection of a creator.

DAVID MILNE: Good.

ASRAR RASHID: No person who believes, even Christian theologians who have accepted the theory of evolution, like the Catholic Church and other Christians, and you've mentioned Muslims even though I would say no Muslim theologian of prominence—with this distinction of prominence—has accepted that as a credal point or in order to explain the Qur'ān. Of prominence ... not isolated scientists, Muslim scientists. Even if someone acknowledged the theory of evolution, it would not entail the non-existence of God. Secondly, the scientific evidence for Allah, as you have been listening to Guy's and my discussion (a discussion with Guy Otten took place earlier) we said that science had a very limited scope, which Guy accepted; we agreed on this. We do not say the belief in Allah is a scientific theory, something that Richard Dawkins mistakes regularly when he critiques the existence of God; he critiques it like a scientific theory. I said it's based on...

DAVID MILNE: Going back, you used the word 'observable', so my question was have you observed the supernatural or the material, and God has to be in either the supernatural or material, and you have neither, therefore you have no evidence for God. Is that not reasonable?

ASRAR RASHID: No, because what I said to you was that the belief in God, is an a posteriori deductive argument which is based on what you observe. Evolution theory itself; did you observe creatures developing and going through a cycle of evolution or was that not an inductive argument based upon the remains of skeletons and different things?

DAVID MILNE: Science is a deductive process.

ASRAR RASHID: Not always. Some scientific theories are inductive and do not impart certainty.

DAVID MILNE: But would you not support the prosecution of, for example, murderers. I am sure you would and most murders are carried out when there is no one else there. Therefore, we use science to convict a murderer. Is that not fair?

ASRAR RASHID: That is fair and proves my point regarding a deductive argument for God. Meaning ... it is not necessary that you see the murderer killing someone, but you know he is the murderer, even though you didn't see him. So, observation is not always necessary in order to believe in something.

DAVID MILNE: And therefore, in order to discover the murderer, you have to use science.

ASRAR RASHID: Not always. Do you watch episodes of Columbo? Does he always use science? It's not always based on deductive arguments using science. Detectives can use other means of...

DAVID MILNE: Could you give us then the reason why you don't accept evolution?

ASRAR RASHID: What I mentioned regarding evolution theory was that when we observe scientific data, the information that we receive sometimes may convince an individual and sometimes it may be an inductive argument that proposes a scientific theory. The classification I gave to evolution theory was one of an inductive argument that does not impart certainty, and for me it does not impart certainty. So, the inductive data, the data presented for evolution theory—the inductive argument made from that—is not the same for me as a deductive argument for God. But even if I accepted evolution theory it would not affect my belief in God because God could be the creator of such a process. But the reason for my rejection of evolution theory is based upon

the inductive reasoning of those who propose to popularise evolution theory today. I mean the popularisation; I have read popular books on evolution theory and even the books of Richard Dawkins, which when you read them a lot of rhetoric is used...

DAVID MILNE: I've read them all.

ASRAR RASHID: Pardon?

DAVID MILNE: I have read them all by the way.

ASRAR RASHID: Yes, 'The Blind Watch Maker' and all these other works, meaning he uses a lot of metaphor ... true?

DAVID MILNE: No.

ASRAR RASHID: Of course he does.

DAVID MILNE: Well he uses metaphor as explanation based upon a scientific explanation.

ASRAR RASHID: Inductive arguments.

DAVID MILNE: I am going to give you a picture, two pictures actually. (To the audience) What I am showing the shaykh is a picture of a whale that's grown a leg. I don't just mean a protuberance, ladies and gentlemen, I mean a leg. Now, whales are marine animals, they live in water, what possible use could a whale have for a leg? It shows that a common ancestor that gave rise to the whale.

ASRAR RASHID: When you quote my position on evolution theory, did you listen to my position correctly?

DAVID MILNE: You can explain it to me, but you don't have to ask whether I understood it.

ASRAR RASHID: So, let me explain. When I lectured on evolution theory, I used to mention that I reject common ancestry, I rejected human evolution. Here what you are presenting is a picture of a whale with limbs. A whale with limbs does not contradict me in any way or form. Even if you presented a horse or a large horse, I would say even though that is possible it does not affect belief in God. Are

you understanding that point, because the belief in God...

DAVID MILNE: You say if you accepted human evolution it would not make any difference?

ASRAR RASHID: No, it wouldn't.

DAVID MILNE: But the point is that you do disagree with it.

ASRAR RASHID: Now you need to be very specific regarding human evolution.

GUY OTTEN: So, do you accept non-human evolution?

ASRAR RASHID: Again, it is something inductive and scientists may find a limb on a whale, it doesn't really affect our belief if we see an animal going through an evolutionary process as it doesn't contradict our revelation. But human origins are decisive.

DAVID MILNE: But we are not talking about revelation. I am suggesting that a leg on a whale contradicts your anti-evolution...

ASRAR RASHID: David, when you say 'anti-evolution' you must be specific. We say that humans do not have common origin with other creatures.

DAVID MILNE: Yes. Why do you say that?

ASRAR RASHID: Based on revelation.

DAVID MILNE: What is the science? There is no science. So, no science. Is that reasonable?

ASRAR RASHID: And the scientific proof presented for human evolution is not sufficient for me.

DAVID MILNE: OK. So, there is this picture here, ladies and gentlemen, it's of a... (member of audience raises his hand to ask David a question regarding the whale).

DAVID MILNE (IN RESPONSE TO AN AUDIENCE MEMBER): No, I am saying that the common ancestry of a marine animal that has the information contained within the embryo to enable it to grow the leg demonstrates common ancestry to

an animal that was able to grow legs. You can't simply put it into an embryo for it to grow legs.

ASRAR RASHID: This is like saying vestigial organs indicate a common ancestry with other animals. I am saying even if there are vestigial organs the inductive process of reasoning by seeing and observing limbs on a whale...

DAVID MILNE: Which is not science?

ASRAR RASHID: No, no. Observing limbs on a whale is one thing but making the conclusion that therefore me and the whale have the same ancestor is an error.

DAVID MILNE: I didn't say that.

ASRAR RASHID: Common ancestry means that.

DAVID MILNE: This second picture of babies, two of them, who were born with tails which had to be removed. Now, that demonstrates common ancestry with a top ancestry that had the ability to grow tails. Primates do not grow tails, we are primates.

ASRAR RASHID: David, can we have a conversation (as David was facing the audience and not engaging). Everyone is educated enough here to know what Darwinian theory is from school, college and university. What I want to ask you David is whether in the past there have been fraudulent cases.

DAVID MILNE: Of course.

ASRAR RASHID: So, this article you present, I've not gone and verified this and have not gone and observed this.

DAVID MILNE: But I have presented it to you now so you can take it away with you and investigate.

ASRAR RASHID: A limb on a whale would not make me conclude that there is no God.

GUY OTTEN: What about the tail on a human?

ASRAR RASHID: A tail on a human being would entail what? No pun intended! What would a tail entail? (Laughter)

DAVID MILNE: It entails that it had common ancestry.

ASRAR RASHID: You've made a 'God-of-the-gaps' type of jump.

DAVID MILNE: No, I haven't.

ASRAR RASHID: So, if we observe a tail on a human being it does not make me conclude that we have common ancestry with apes or anything else.

The Darwinian evolutionary hypothesis regarding human origins, from the research of the Leakey family in the early 1900s till today, does not impart any true knowledge for the impartial, impassionate and objective reader. This scientific field awaits massive breakthroughs and needs a paradigm shift. Muslims cannot waver in their conviction that the first man was created and fashioned from the Earth through an inconclusive hypothesis that imparts no real certainty and facing a crisis pending a major paradigm shift. The metaphor of life emerging from a primordial soup (soil?) still awaits creative solutions, as do the first self-replicating cells and human consciousness itself. The Darwinian theory of human origins as it stands today is insufficient to resolve those questions. The theory should not be treated like gravity, photosynthesis or relativity as it simply is not the same. How true is what Richard Dawkins says in 'A Devil's Chaplain':

> "We can now assert with confidence that the theory that the Earth moves round the Sun not only is right for our time but will be right in all future times even if flat-Earthism happens to become revived and universally accepted in some new dark age of human history. We cannot quite say that Darwinism is in the same unassailable class. *Respectable opposition to it can still be mounted, and it can be argued that the current high standing of Darwinism in educated minds may not last*

> *through all future generations.* Darwin may be triumphant at the end of the twentieth century, but we must acknowledge the possibility that new facts may come to light which will force our successors of the twenty-first century to abandon Darwinism or modify it beyond recognition."[101]

As is clear from Dawkin's assertion, Darwinian evolution theory is susceptible to a paradigm shift and an abandonment by its adherents or a total modification. Such a theory would be classed as total uncertainty by theologians and quite unable to reinterpret the unequivocal statements of the Qur'ān which inform us of human origins from soil. Science awaits major breakthroughs and data gathering for an inevitable paradigm shift.

"But what will become of the men then?" I asked him, *"Without God and immortal life? All things are permitted then, they can do what they like?"*

—Fyodor Dostoyevsky in 'The Brothers Karamazov'

CHAPTER SIX

The Qur'ān, Ḥadīth & *Sharī'a*

6.1 ISLAM

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THE LIMITS SET by Islamic Law, its various prohibitions and dietary laws, its military code, penal law and judgements relating to human rights are continuously under scrutiny and are the last recourse for the atheism/Islam debate. When everything from epistemology, proofs for God's existence and the problem of evil and suffering have been exhaustively debated, the final resort for disparagement lies with *Sharī'a* Law and its subsidiary rulings, particularly regarding the rights of women, homosexuals and slaves, to mention a few. This is almost certainly why the debate between New Atheism and Islam is not purely scientific, philosophical and theological but overlaps with politics; from the clash over feminism with the Neo-Liberal humanists, along with Western democracy, homosexual rights and Zionism.

Islam is denounced as a terrorist entity with its roots in a medieval tribal Arabia accused of enslaving and making its women chattel, while at the same time western liberal democracies continue to arm proxy armies, sell arms to Saudi Arabia and other oppressive regimes, train terrorists and make trade

ties with countries with universal human rights violations. Any political reaction by the already supressed populous will be labelled as Islamist extremism and blamed on the Qur'ān and Islamic teachings; typical reactions that ignore the social, historical, political, ethnic, economic and other factors which have led to the formation of groups like Hamas or any other resistance, labelled as terrorism, in a region where the people happen to be Muslim.

This final chapter analyses the main objections to Islamic *Sharīʿa* Law and the historicity of its two main sources, namely the Qur'ān and the Sunna, the latter being the teachings, sayings, actions and character of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

The Qur'ān and Sunna must be considered as the principal sources of *Sharīʿa* Law. The legal rulings of *Sharīʿa* are taken from about five hundred verses of the Qur'ān and over a thousand Ḥadīth. Less than twenty percent of specific legal issues are disputed amongst Muslim jurists, a degree of difference permitted by the Prophet ﷺ to allow leeway and laxity in the *Sharīʿa* Law. Legal judgements may have more than one ruling, which is an especially important fact when considering the application of *Sharīʿa* in today's global society. Such parameters of dispute are deemed a mercy by classical scholars and a leniency legislated by God Himself to ease the law on the nation of the Prophet ﷺ.

6.2 THE PRESERVATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

The Muslim standpoint on the Qur'ān is that its historical preservation was completed in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, alongside its complete memorisation, its different orthography and recitation modes. This phenomenon has been ex-

amined and scrutinised from all angles by religious groups, orientalists and other critics, with their resulting contentions often regurgitated by militant atheism in a very unacademic way.

The Qur'ān was written and memorised over a period of twenty-three years. It worked in the following way; revelations would be sent down to the Prophet ﷺ as readings who would then recite them and order a scribe to write them out. That written copy would then be dictated to others, who themselves would also write down that portion of the Qur'ān on the writing materials of that period; such as, parchment, white slate, scapula bones and even the bark of certain trees.

The original written Qur'ān was assembled and kept in the house of the Prophet ﷺ and people would memorise and write it down there. The recitation and memorising were done directly under the direction of the Prophet ﷺ. Since the companions had written down the Qur'ān for their own personal use, they were commanded by the Prophet ﷺ not to touch it except in a state of ritual purity by ablution [*wuḍū'*]. The Qur'ān reinforces that by saying, ﴾*Indeed, it is a noble Qur'ān. In a register well-protected; none touch it except the purified*﴿ [Qur'ān 56:77-80].

Once the Qur'ān had started to be written down and people were collecting it in manuscript form, they were told by the Prophet ﷺ: "Do not take the Qur'ān on a journey with you, for I am afraid lest it should fall into the hands of the enemy"[102]. The fear related to any denigration or disrespect that could be displayed by non-Muslims in pagan Arabia toward the written copy of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān, unlike any other religious text or any other book or document in human history, was memorised by thousands of people during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and

has been memorised by millions in every subsequent generation until today. Aside from the thousands having memorised the Qur'ān in its entirety then and the millions later, nearly every Muslim has memorised some parts of the Qur'ān. This continuous chain of memorisation, generation by generation, is sufficient to guarantee the preservation of the Qur'ān and remove any doubt of it having been altered.

Despite this, some citations from Islamic sources or inferences from contemporary Qur'ānic manuscripts are presented to invalidate the authenticity and mass transmission of the Qur'ān. The first claim is that Abū Bakr ﷺ was the first to compile the Qur'ān in written form within the first two years after the Prophet's passing ﷺ as is related in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. They use the following narration (for which, commentary is added between brackets):

> Zayd b. Thābit ﷺ said: "Abū Bakr sent for me owing to the large number of casualties in the battle of Yamāma (a battle that occurred shortly after the passing of the Prophet ﷺ between the Caliphate and the eastern Arab tribes that rebelled), while ʿUmar was sitting with him. Abū Bakr said, "ʿUmar has come to me and said, 'A great number of reciters (here the word *Qurrā'* means those who memorised the entire Qur'ān even though it literally means reciters—this term is still employed in the same way today) of the Qur'ān were killed on the day of the battle of Yamāma, and I am afraid that the casualties among the reciters of the Qur'ān may increase on other battle-fields whereby a large part of the Qur'ān may be lost. Therefore, I consider it advisable that you should have the Qur'ān collected.' I said, 'How dare I do something which God's Messenger ﷺ did not do?' (This was in reference to the fact that the Prophet ﷺ did not have one single authorised bound copy but nevertheless did have the entire Qur'ān written down.) ʿUmar said, 'By God, it would be something beneficial.' ʿUmar kept on pressing

me for that until God opened my chest (an expression used for agreement in Arabic) in the same way He had opened the chest of ʿUmar to the point I had the same opinion as ʿUmar.'

Abū Bakr then said to me (Zayd), 'You are a wise young man and we do not think you suspect in any way. Since you yourself have written down the divine revelations given to God's Messenger ﷺ, so, you should search for the fragmentary scripts (that were commissioned by the Prophet ﷺ) of the Qur'ān and collect them (into one official copy).'"

Zayd further said: "By Allah, if Abū Bakr had ordered me to shift a mountain among the mountains from one place to another it would not have been heavier for me than his ordering me to collect the Qur'ān. I said, 'How can we do something which Allah's Messenger ﷺ did not do?' Abū Bakr said, 'By God, it is something beneficial.'"

Zayd added, "He kept pressing me on the matter until God opened my chest in the way He had opened the chests of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, until I too came to the same opinion. So, I started compiling the Qur'ān (all the parchments and materials that had been written in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ) by collecting it from the leafless stalks of the date-palm tree, from pieces of leather and hide, and from stone tablets, and from the chests of men (who had memorised the Qur'ān). I found the last verses of the Chapter of Repentance [*Sūra al-Tawba*]: ﴿ *Verily there has come to you a messenger from amongst yourselves...* ﴾ [Qur'ān 9:128-129] from Khuzayma and I added it to the rest of the chapter. The copy of the Qur'ān remained with Abū Bakr till God took him unto Him. Then it remained with ʿUmar till God took him unto Him, and then with Ḥafṣa daughter of ʿUmar."[103]

This report and similar variants are often used to give the false impression that the Qur'ān had not been compiled. We know from numerous other reports and mass transmissions

that this claim is false. The Qur'ān was written down in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and memorised by thousands of people either completely or in parts. Orientalists like to use the word 'recension' along with other western Anglo-Euro terms on Muslim history and it is hard to restrain ourselves sometimes from using derogatory language in like manner for the tangled, Byzantine, Anglo-Euro world that we have inherited. The term 'recension' gives the impression that the Qur'ān had not been written down, memorised and preserved prior to the Caliph's instruction and subsequently was tampered with. This is misleading and misconstruing the facts.

There are some important details to note also when reading the account of Zayd's ﷺ office to compile the Qur'ān. When Zayd ﷺ went around Madina gathering the parchments, he was approaching those people who were alive when the Qur'ān was being revealed, the same people who had written the verses, or witnessed their revelation and their being written down. Zayd ﷺ was essentially collecting the original writings to place in one volume. Caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar ﷺ, Zayd ﷺ and hundreds of others had memorised the entire Qur'ān so they knew what to expect on the parchments and from the witnesses. This is the meaning of Zayd's ﷺ statement when he said, 'I found the last verses of the Chapter of Repentance [*Sūra al-Tawba*] [...] from Khuzayma and I added it to the rest of the chapter.' 'Found' means that Khuzayma ﷺ had been the eyewitness to the revelation of the verses on the Prophet ﷺ and he had the original copy of those verses. This meaning is not superimposed by the author or Muslim scholarship but is clear from corroborative narrations on the same historical event, as well as the context of Zayd ﷺ collecting the original parchments and seeking the witnesses who had observed the revelation. In that context, after mentioning an array of people who had observed the revelation

of the verses of the entire Qur'ān, finally Zayd ﵁ mentions the last verses witnessed by Khuzayma ﵁. What it does not mean is that no one else knew of those verses and that Zayd had simply learnt them from Khuzayma. Such a claim would be absurd since the companions, including Zayd, had already memorised the entire Qur'ān and many of them had their personal volumes (the Arabic word being *muṣḥaf*), but it was not from the personal copies or the memorising of everyone Zayd ﵁ was compiling, it was only from the parchments that were written by the command of the Prophet ﷺ and from those individuals who witnessed this.

By the time Zayd ﵁ had completed the official copy, it was simply kept with the Caliph and people continued reading from their own personal copies and from what they had memorised. The personal recitations of people included the various modes and dialects of recitation taught by the Prophet ﷺ and referred to as 'the seven letters' which allowed people to recite the Qur'ān within local parlance, not dissimilar to the pronunciation of words like 'tomato' in America and England or differences in spelling conventions between the same countries. It also encompassed change within the verb forms, from the active to the passive voice or sometimes using a different particle or word.

It is this last part that Orientalists, Christian polemicists and atheists who choose to undermine Islam quote as 'proof' that the Qur'ān had variants or that there were more than one Qur'ān. This contention ignores the fact that the modes of recitation have no internal contradictions of meaning, rather they complement one another and more importantly, were taught by the Prophet ﷺ himself to the companions during the revelation of the Qur'ān.

The modes of recitation of the Qur'ān were known, incredible as that may seem to the would-be detractors today. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ recounted that he met Angel Gabriel ﷺ, he said: "O Gabriel! I have been sent to an illiterate nation. Among them are old and young men and women, and those who have never read any writing!" Gabriel answered him, "O Muḥammad ﷺ, the Qur'ān has been revealed in seven letters!"[104]

There are numerous other reports mentioning the seven letters of the revelation. Scholars have attempted to tie down their exact meaning and there are at least forty declarations to that end. It may be that they cannot be defined precisely, but all agree that the difference in recitation, of words or dialect, is down to the seven letters. One early scholar, al-Zuhrī, stated:

> "The text of this Ḥadīth makes it clear that the difference between the seven letters is a difference of words which agree in meaning, not a difference in meanings entailing a difference of legal norms."[105]

The seven letters may be the reason for the differences of the mass transmitted recitations, but they do not occasion different versions of the Qur'ān as claimed.

As mentioned, when Zayd ﷺ had finished the official compilation of the Qur'ān, it was left with the Caliph. People continued reciting from their own copied scripts and from whatever they could learn directly from the companions who had in turn learnt from the Prophet himself ﷺ. This continued for around twelve years until Caliph ʿUthmān ﷺ authorised one single copy of the Qur'ān for everyone to copy from, rather than continuing to use their personal copies. Apart from

establishing the order of the chapters there was a need to standardise the orthography and spelling so all the seven letters could be included into one copy. New Muslims and people who had not met the Prophet ﷺ would write the Qur'ān down according to their own spelling principles. ʿUthmān ﷺ and the senior companions again commissioned Zayd ﷺ to go around and check examples of the written Qur'ān and verify—with a minimum of two witnesses—that this orthography was that as commanded by the Prophet ﷺ. ʿUthmān ﷺ in this way was not gathering the Qur'ān for the first time as it had already been compiled and put to memory, but rather was commissioning one style of orthography known as '*rasm*' for the purpose of making the spelling consistent. When the commissioned body disagreed on the spelling of a word, they would write it in accordance with the Quraysh way of spelling as that was the dialect of the Prophet ﷺ. Once the volume of the Qur'ān had been prepared, copies were sent to the major cities of the caliphate like Makkah, Damascus, Kufa and Basra, while the main copy remained in Madina, the capital of the caliphate at that time. Slight differences in spellings, and therefore in recitation, remained in some of those volumes until today, by no way invalidating them, but giving people a choice in a few particular instances to write them down or recite them in one of two ways.

That this became a source of misconception for objectors to Islam and their like is understandable but remains common knowledge amongst Qur'ān recitation experts who conserve the various transmissions and indeed most lay Muslims understand this too. Few will be moved by the absurd claim made that there are thirty versions of the Qur'ān! Such claims are probably made by the Christian polemicists as a riposte to the various translated and expunged versions of the Bible. The Qur'ān and the Bible are not the same in this regard

however, since the Qur'ān is not a translation. The Qur'ān is in its original tongue and has been memorised by millions in every century since it was revealed, and is still agreed upon today as one Qur'ān by all sects, from Sunnī to Shīʿa and everyone else.

Has a single Jew or Christian memorised the entire Bible, Old Testament or New Testament, in its original language and recited it by heart? The Muslims recite the Qur'ān from memory every day, in the five daily prayers, at events, in private daily life, and once a year in the holy month of Ramaḍān, millions of people recite the Qur'ān in prayer from memory in front of millions of worshippers in the special night prayers of *Tarāwīḥ*. If the reciter makes a mistake or alters any word he is corrected straight away. These unique factors are not found in any religious or non-religious text anywhere in the world or in human history.

After having mobilised the people towards the master copies of the Qur'ān and telling them to copy from them, ʿUthmān ﷺ requested that all those who had made copies with variant spellings or different chapter orders to only follow the agreed upon orthography and order of chapters as dictated by the Prophet ﷺ. Those who were unable to remove the wrong spelling burnt the copies and subsequently re-wrote them in accordance with the correct orthography. This was especially true for the people who had entered Islam and were not Arab.

The copy Zayd ﷺ had gathered twelve years earlier under Caliph Abū Bakr ﷺ remained in the possession of Ḥafṣa ﷺ, the daughter of Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ, and along with the private copies of the copies written in the time of the Prophet ﷺ, there was a consensus that they and the copy commissioned by ʿUthmān ﷺ were all the same. Not a single person raised

an objection that the Qur'ān had been tampered with in either its written form or its oral transmission. Even during the civil wars and bloody revolutions that occurred during and after the reign of Caliph ʿUthmān ﷺ, not a single opponent of Caliphs ʿUthmān, ʿAlī or Muʿāwiya ﷺ, ever raised objections regarding the preservation of the Qur'ān. None of the early sects doubted it despite numerous political and theological disputes.

After the volumes of the Qur'ān (referred to as codices by orientalists and *maṣāḥif*, the plural of *muṣḥaf*, by Muslims) had been despatched to the main cities with head reciters to teach people the correct pronunciation and recitation, the people would refer to these chains of transmission as *Qirā'āt*. The *Qirā'āt* should not be confused with the seven letters, *Aḥruf*, though the differences found in the *Qirā'āt* are due to the *Aḥruf*. The *Qirā'āt* are simply the chains of oral transmission of the recitations that go back to the Prophet ﷺ, while the *Aḥruf* account for the differences found within the *Qirā'āt*.

A transmission may be named after anyone in the chain of recitation; 'the transmission of Ḥafṣ from ʿĀṣim', for instance. The number of transmissions of the Qur'ān were numerous in the early centuries of Islam, but later authorities wrote these down based on the most popular recitations which then became the established or canonical ones. The discarded recitations were simply not as widespread as the canonical recitations but are still used for exegesis of the Qur'ān and have been recorded in numerous classical commentaries of the Qur'ān.

Initially, al-Shāṭibī, a famous scholar of Qur'ān recitation and elocution, compiled the seven most famous transmissions drawing on the well-known reciters. This was completed later by Ibn al-Jazarī who added another three, bringing the agreed

upon recitations to ten. Other recitations, as mentioned, were relegated and largely only used for their grammatical, juristic and exegetical value.

The above summarises the appearance of the Qur'ānic text, but a few obscurities need to be mentioned as they are sometimes presented as academic fact when they are not.

With regard to the ten *Qirā'āt* being deemed as mass transmitted, objections remain that they were not so and that al-Shāṭibī, Ibn al-Jazarī and others had simply deemed these as the most authentic in terms of their chain of narration and were not necessarily mass transmitted. Additionally, it is objected that if these transmissions were mass transmitted, why were they named after only one person in the chain, like the recitation of Ḥafṣ or Warsh. The response is that the chains of transmission being mentioned and ascribed to a few does not entail that recitation not being widespread amongst others. Such a misunderstanding is based on the idea that the recitation itself was limited to Ḥafṣ as it was named after Ḥafṣ. The reality however is that all the recitations were well known and mass transmitted in each generation but that the Qur'ān recitation experts selected those people in every generation and synchronic layer who were known for their knowledge of the language, morphology, syntax and other essential requirements. This did not mean that the entire recitation is based on that one expert, as the recitation was well known and widespread. A point ignored by critics of the Qur'ān is that even if only one recitation were authentic it would be sufficient to vouch for the preservation of the Qur'ān. The fact is that ten have been preserved through mass transmission and others conserved for commentaries on the Qur'ān.

One example might be that an authentic chain of narrators, a single chain, informs one of Samarqand. It does not mean that the existence of Samarqand becomes doubtful due to it being only a single chain of transmission because the existence of Samarqand is well known and mass transmitted. An example of this within the non-Muslim, western reader's sphere would be the fact that the King James version of the Bible was commissioned by King James I of England. This fact is mass transmitted, but if that version had been memorised and transmitted by heart from generation to generation (in the manner of the Qur'ān) and if someone decided to collect these narrations from the most expert reciters, but not everyone, would this render the recitation of the King James Bible as not being mass transmitted simply because the chains of narration collected only mentioned one person in each synchronic layer or because the names given to the transmissions were names of the most expert reciters of that chain? The answer would be negative, of course.

Other objections brought up with regard to the historical preservation of the Qur'ānic text revolve around what is known as the concept of 'abrogation'. In the Qur'ān sciences it is known as *'naskh'* and it refers to verses which were indeed abrogated. So, how do Muslims respond to this objection? Like many things that will be covered in this chapter, if stated correctly, very little credibility can remain with the objection, and that is also the case when discussing abrogation in the Qur'ān.

Firstly, the abrogation in question refers only to verses that were abrogated during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and while the Qur'ān was still being revealed—not after its revelation was completed. Abrogation is mentioned in the Qur'ān as a reality and is not something unknown in the history of Islam. It happened prior to the finalisation of the Qur'ān, before the

revelation stopped, and before the Prophet ﷺ passed away.

In the final year of his ﷺ life on earth, the Angel Gabriel ﷺ revised—as in recited from memory—the entire Qur'ān, twice, with the Prophet ﷺ. Fāṭima ﷺ reported:

> "The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Gabriel would come to me to revise the Qur'ān once every year. This year he revised with me twice. I do not think it means anything more than that my term will soon come to an end. Verily, you will be the first of the people of my house to meet me.'"[106]

This means that the entire Qur'ān was finalised in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ.

Secondly, the abrogation strictly refers to legal rulings. It refers to revised rulings which simplified the practice of Islam for the early Muslims. Alcohol, gambling, and some other vices were outlawed gradually. A proof for the existence of abrogation in the divine commands of God during revelation is the abrogation of legal judgements in previously divinely revealed laws. Some Christians deny any abrogation in God's commandments. How then would they answer the common atheist question as to how the progeny of Ādam ﷺ procreated if marriage to siblings was outlawed by God? The Muslim theologian's answer to this is that since the offspring was divided into offspring of the day, meaning those born in the day, and conversely offspring of the night, for one generation, the offspring of the day were permitted to marry the offspring of the night until this legal judgement was annulled and abrogated by God in the subsequent generation.

Further doubts placed on the textual and historical veracity of the Qur'ān either refer to the private copies of the Qur'ān

written down by the companions or to reports having no clear chain of transmission. These may state that a particular person had a copy of the Qur'ān with the chapters in a different order, or certain chapters missing. Before the printing press, people obviously had to write copies of the Qur'ān out or pay a scribe. The copies of the Qur'ān that were written in the early period were huge, like the Qur'ān manuscript found in Tashkent. This is why it was not uncommon for some people to have partial copies or with some chapters missing and in no way does it invalidate the historical veracity of the textual and oral transmission of the Qur'ān.

Some reports state that 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ūd ﷺ, for instance, had a few small chapters missing from his personal copy of the Qur'ān and that a student of his may have mentioned those odd missing chapters, like *al-Fātiḥa*, *al-Falaq* and *al-Nās*. What is omitted by orientalists is the fact that 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ūd ﷺ taught those same chapters as Qur'ān to dozens of students but did not include those chapters in his personal copy of the Qur'ān simply because they are short chapters that are regularly recited daily. The observation made by his student was regarding his written copy and not the actual transmission of the Qur'ān because dozens of people transmitted the entire Qur'ān from him, including the aforementioned chapters.

Other reports mention that a companion added a word to his copy of the Qur'ān. Such reports are then exaggerated by Orientalists and others to say that there were companions who had a Qur'ān with different words, when in reality they refer to comments made by those companions or simply notes in the marginalia for commentary purposes, mistaken by some to be a part of the recitation.

The same rule applies to partial manuscripts, or complete manuscripts that are found across the world's museums and private collections. Sometimes a copyist's typographical error or similar is picked on disingenuously but these copies of the Qur'ān in fact further support the textual integrity of the Qur'ān as they corroborate what has been memorised by millions in every generation, a fact overlooked by critics of Islam.

Any reports that mention that a particular verse of the Qur'ān was recited and then was no longer recited, or a particular chapter was long and then reduced in size, or a particular verse was written on a parchment that then disappeared, should not surprise people as these statements were a reference to the abrogation of verses during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ before the last revision of the Qur'ān, and the mass transmission of the Qur'ān is not affected by a missing parchment as the entire Qur'ān always has been and will be memorised. Even if someone did away with all the physical copies of the Qur'ān, it is the only book that can be written from human memory in its entirety and accurately due to the millions of people who have memorised it and recite it on a daily basis.

In conclusion, the isolated single narrations that are commonly quoted by detractors regarding the historical preservation of the Qur'ān will either be in reference to abrogation, or a reference to personal copies of the Qur'ān belonging to companions and others which had some chapters missing or margin notes. Other than these, they refer to chainless reports with no authenticity such as the case of many of the reports cited in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* of Imām al-Suyūṭī, the purpose of whose work was merely to collate everything on a particular subject without verifying its authenticity.

6.3 THE PRESERVATION OF THE ḤADĪTH & SUNNA

Sunna is prophetic guidance. It includes the sayings, actions and the tacit approval of the Prophet ﷺ. The repository for the Sunna lies in the chain of transmission preserved through the continuous action of consecutive generations or written down in the works of Ḥadīth. The latter, written works, have been the source of controversy for detractors of Islam and also those who may accept the Qur'ān but strongly contest the veracity of the Ḥadīth collections. One of the main points of contention is that these collections were compiled at least two hundred years after the Prophet ﷺ. This objection prima facie may sound valid but after closer scrutiny the argument can be seen to unravel. Even if the most famous collections were collected decades after the Prophet ﷺ, they in fact encompassed earlier collections and the folios of earlier compilers. This occurred simply because the earlier collections were smaller and the narrations accumulating around one narrator or Ḥadīth master only comprised of a small number of reports. What the later collectors and Ḥadīth masters did was to compile many of those narrations under one roof, so to speak.

One of the earliest works of Ḥadīth extant today is the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Imām Mālik in which Imām Mālik included chains of narration linking back to the Prophet ﷺ through the transmission of just two people. He narrated from Nāfiʿ ؓ, who then narrated from ʿAbd Allah the son of Caliph ʿUmar ؓ, who then narrated directly from and regarding the Prophet ﷺ. This chain of transmitters is known as 'the golden chain' because of the pristine authenticity, reliability, trustworthiness as well as its shortness. The complete narrations of a single narrator like Nāfiʿ would, around his time,

be compiled in one short volume with his narrations not exceeding a few hundred at the most. However, a later compilation including the narrations of his contemporaries would obviously increase the number of narrations. This is precisely what compilers like Imām Mālik did.

It would be more accurate to say that the later compilers of Ḥadīth gathered the many Ḥadīth folios from the earlier key generations into larger works, with the later compilers supplying their own chains of transmission up to those crucial narrators of Ḥadīth and also categorising them. The categorisation of Ḥadīth was necessary as earlier Ḥadīth compilations had no order in terms of subject matter and were simple collections of what earlier narrators had related. Their comprehensiveness was due to this amassing of narrations from earlier Ḥadīth masters and giving them a particular order.

The objection to the veracity of some Ḥadīth ignores two further facts. The first being that the manuscripts of the early Ḥadīth compilers prior to the later more popular compilers like al-Bukhārī and Muslim still exist in manuscript form. The manuscript of the document of Hammām b. Munabbih, a student of Abū Hurayra ﷺ the companion of the Prophet ﷺ is one such example. If one took the trouble to compare some of these earlier manuscripts with what has been recorded in later compilations, they would find them to be the same. Secondly, by the time that Ḥadīth literature evolved so also had the chains of transmission become more scrupulously observed with a clear record of the biographical notes on the narrators. Earlier work on narrator criticism was incorporated into later works, and Ḥadīth masters of the later generation just before al-Bukhārī and Muslim, developed a tenacious ability to detect discrepancies and inconsistencies in Ḥadīth chains as well as in the meticulousness of the narrators. This was to develop into a rigorous critical methodology

known as 'narrator discrediting and accreditation' [*jarḥ wa taʿdīl*].

One rational and logical proof that demonstrates the reliability of Ḥadīth literature as a whole—and as a genre—is the following historical scenario, which the author believes is totally irrefutable. From the 26th to the 28th July 657 CE a terrible battle occurred between two warring factions of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, after the uprising against and the tragic assassination of Caliph ʿUthmān ؓ by a marginal group in Egypt. This group of zealots were not from the companions of the Prophet ﷺ but were from those who had entered Islam after the conquests and some from the younger generation of Arabs. ʿUthmān ؓ was martyred on the 17th June 656 CE. Thousands of people who had met and associated with the Prophet ﷺ joined the newly elected Caliph ʿAlī ؓ, but owing to the confusion, many of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ including the brother of ʿAlī, ʿAqīl ؓ, joined the opposition in Syria that demanded the killers of ʿUthmān ؓ be brought to justice. ʿAlī ؓ maintained the correct position that law and order should be restored before any one was brought to justice. The stalemate after the martyrdom of ʿUthmān ؓ lasted for nearly six years until Caliph ʿAlī ؓ himself was assassinated by a heretical sect known as the Khawārij. During the six years of his caliphate there were a few terrible and bloody battles, schisms and internal insurrections. Yet, despite this not a single group contested the authenticity of the Qur'ān and not a single companion of those opposing ʿAlī ؓ forged a Ḥadīth or falsely ascribed a single statement of the Prophet ﷺ to support their opposition to ʿAlī ؓ. In fact, even after Caliph ʿAlī ؓ, into the time of Yazīd and other bitter and vehement enemies of Caliph ʿAlī ؓ and his progeny, not a single person was able to concoct and fabricate Ḥadīth condemning Caliph ʿAlī ؓ and ascribe them to

the Prophet ﷺ, despite having military and political support.

In the later period, the scholars of Ḥadīth compiled the largest extant works that we have today which incorporated the folios of earlier Ḥadīth compilers and even the scrolls of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, like the *Ṣaḥīfa* of ʿAlī ؓ, or the written Ḥadīth of the companion ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAmr ؓ and many others. These later larger works were used precisely because they incorporated many earlier works and were much more comprehensive in making chapter headings and ordering the Ḥadīth according to subject matter. These works today serve as the very foundations of Islam and are known as:

- *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*—also known as: 'The Abridged Collection of Authentic Ḥadīth with Connected Chains regarding Matters Pertaining to the Prophet ﷺ, his Practices and his Times' [*al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad al-Mukhtaṣar min Umūr Rasūl-Allah ﷺ wa Sunan-hi wa Ayyām-hi*]—by Imām Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (D. 870 CE);
- *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*—also known as: 'The Abridged Collection of Authentic Ḥadīth with Connected Chains regarding Prophetic Traditions with Narrations of the Upright from the Upright from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ [*al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar min al-Sunan bi-Naql al-ʿAdl ʿan al-ʿAdl ʿan Rasūl Allah* ﷺ]—by Imām Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī (D. 875 CE);
- *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*—also known as: 'The Abridged Collection of Prophetic Traditions from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and Knowing the Authentic

and Weak Narrations as well as what is Acted upon' [*al-Jāmiʿ al-Mukhtaṣar min al-Sunan ʿan Rasūl Allah ﷺ wa Maʿrifa al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Maʿlul wa mā ʿalay-hi al-ʿAmal*]—by Imām Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī (D. 892 CE);

- *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*—also known as: 'The Concise *Sunan*' [*al-Sunan al-Ṣughrā*] or 'The Chosen *Sunan*' [*al-Sunan al-Mujtabā*]—by Imām Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī (D. 915 CE);
- *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* by Imām Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath al-Sijistāni (D. 889 CE);
- *Sunan Ibn Māja* by Imām Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Qazwīnī (D. 887 CE);
- The *Musnad* of Imām Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (D. 869 CE);
- *Al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥiḥayn* by Imām Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (D. 1014 CE);
- The *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Imām Mālik b. Anas al-Aṣbaḥī (D. 795 CE);
- The *Musnad* of Imām Abū ʿAbd Allah Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī (D. 855 CE);
- The three *Maʿājim* collections (*al-Ṣaghīr*, *al-Awsaṭ* and *al-Kabīr*) of Imām Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī (D. 918 CE);
- The *Musnad* of Imām Abū Yaʿlā Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Mawṣilī (D. 919 CE);
- The *Muṣannaf* of Imām Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (D. 849 CE);

- The *Muṣannaf* of Imām ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣanʿāni (D. 827 CE);
- The *Musnad*—also known as: 'The Overflowing Sea' [*al-Baḥr al-Zakhkhār*]—of Imām Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bazzār (D. 905 CE);
- *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā* by Imām Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (D. 1066 CE), and so many others.

6.4 CLASSIFICATION OF ḤADĪTH

The scholars of Ḥadīth divided all reports into those mass narrated [*mutawātir*] and those from lone narrators [*āḥād*]. Mass transmitted reports are not categorised as authentic or weak simply because they are all accepted. Lone narrator reports, on the other hand, can be authentic, acceptable, weak or forgeries. These categories can be sub-divided into five hundred categories in total. A lone narrator Ḥadīth which is authentic can be scrutinised in terms of its interpretation and in terms of textual criticism relating to the preciseness of a particular wording. So, even though there is agreement amongst Sunnī Muslims that everything in al-Bukharī and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* works are authentic, it does not mean that Sunnī scholarship does not scrutinise the text of some of the lone narrator reports. Someone unacquainted with this subtlety will veer to the fallacy of 'you hold *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī* to be authentic; therefore, you must believe x, y and z'.

An additional misunderstanding is that later Ḥadīth scholars refer to six of these books as authentic [*ṣaḥīḥ*], with people mistaking this to mean everything in those six books (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*,

Sunan Abī Dāwūd, *Sunan Ibn Māja* and *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*) was authentic. In reality, however, what the Ḥadīth scholars meant was that the overwhelming majority of these Ḥadīth works were authentically reported.

6.5 *SHARĪʿA* LAW

For someone in this day and age, even if they have understood much relating to the divine existence of God, His divine attributes and actions and the reasoning behind so many unanswered questions, even to the point of realising that the Qurʾān and Sunna have been preserved and untampered with throughout the centuries, after all that, *Sharīʿa* Law with its prohibitions and restraints on one's desires, as well as its seemingly harsh legal rulings and punishments remains the biggest stumbling block for many to enter or even approach Islam. Yet *Sharīʿa* Law was a comprehensive legal system which governed vast empires for thirteen hundred years before the formation of modern Arab nationalist states and monarchies, the latter, even if they retained some segments of *Sharīʿa* Law, being overall secular countries. Saudi Arabia in particular developed its own unique tribal interpretations of some aspects of *Sharīʿa* Law and though contrary to *Sharīʿa* in many aspects, it is still the firm opinion of most, thanks to the media, that Saudi Arabia is governed by Islam. The truth, however, that it is ruled by a Bedouin family from the eastern Najd province which has superimposed that unique interpretation of law and creed—known as Wahhabism to some and Salafism to others—over the population. One has to wonder why Saudi Arabia remains an ally of the same people who criticise Islam and who use it to vindicate their unfair criticism of Islam, not unsimilar to the Parsees in the British Raj.

Sharīʿa Law under the caliphates governed an entire multi-religious and multi-ethnic region for thirteen hundred years. It was of course not an Utopia and no one should claim it as such, but it was a system of governance that definitely worked. The following summary of the more contentious issues pertaining to Islamic law is not intended to distort the *Sharīʿa* rulings to appease detractors but aims to demonstrate how the rulings are incorrectly conceptualised when presented as being Islam.

6.6 *JIHĀD*

Jihād is military warfare that has been legislated in the Qurʾān, Sunna and is agreed upon by all jurists. The verses relating to *Jihād* in the Qurʾān address Muslim rulers and military. *Jihād* was legislated to forestall aggression from the unbelievers, not encourage the type of aggression unleashed against aborigine peoples or the native American Indians, for example. If Islam did not have the rule of *Jihād* as a part of its religion, many races would have been subdued and exterminated by the pioneers of concentration camps. It was not indeed Muslims or the caliphate who invented concentration camps, chemical warfare, nuclear weapons, dumdum bullets, apartheid, mass genocides, daisy cutters and a host of other monstrosities. The tragic Armenian genocide at the tail end of the caliphate was not in fact carried out by the caliph, Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II, who had been deposed from the throne earlier. The government was ruled by the people who would eventually abolish Islam. This remains today a contentious matter between western historians and Turkish historians.

Armed struggle was legislated in the context of fighting oppression and this is why God says in the Qurʾān, ﴾*Permis-*

sion to fight back is hereby granted to those being fought, for they have been wronged. And Allah is truly Most Capable of helping them prevail﴿ [Qur'ān 22:39]. All the verses on *Jihād* must be taken in the context of this verse alongside other verses like, ﴾*Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and fairly with those who have neither fought nor driven you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are fair*﴿ [Qur'ān 60:8]. This is the meaning of the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, "I have been ordered to counter people who fight until they say: there is no deity only God."[107] The misreading of this Ḥadīth created the myth that 'Islam spread by the sword' translated as it was into 'I have been commanded to fight people until they say...', giving the impression that the Prophet ﷺ was commanded to counter in order to spread Islam. The misreading emanates from understanding the verb '*uqātil*' to be translated as 'to fight', when in reality the verb is constructed from the Arabic form *mufā'ala* which entails reciprocation. So, the meaning of the Ḥadīth is, 'I have been commanded to reciprocate or counter those who fight us.'

Jihād was in fact legislated to resist and remove the aggression and sustained warfare against Muslims by certain factions who attempt to demoralise, degrade, subdue, destroy, annihilate and subjugate Islam and Muslims, like 'Israel' today and colonial Britain, France and Italy as well as others in recent and crusader history. This is the meaning of the Qur'ān when it commands the fighters to cut off the tops of the fingers of the enemy on the battlefield, in order that the aggressor is unable to grasp a sword and attack. God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*Remember, O Prophet, when your Lord revealed to the angels, 'I am with you. So, make the believers stand firm. I will cast horror into the hearts of the unbelievers. So, strike their necks and strike their fingertips'*﴿ [Qur'ān 8:12].

The underlying reason for the command to perform *Jihād* is to remove aggression, and that is why all the battles and conquests of the Prophet ﷺ were pre-emptive in nature, in other words going on the offensive, in battles where foreign invaders are threatening the borders, for example, the ruler may take the strategic decision to strike first, inside the lands of the aggressor. *Jihād* also makes the case for defensive measures, for people to protect their homes or homeland from foreign aggression. An offensive strategy remains the prerogative of the ruling Amīrs.

The expansion of the Islamic caliphate during the early conquests was not on the basis of spreading Islam by the sword. They were in fact conquests for the emancipation of various groups, like Arab minorities and various Christian sects in Jerusalem, or pre-emptive strikes against the Byzantine and Persian empires. The greatest evidence that the purpose of the conquests was not to spread Islam by the sword is the fact that the majority of these countries remained non-Muslim for hundreds of years despite being ruled by Muslims, like Greater Syria which had a Christian majority until the time of the crusades. Additionally, all the countries supposedly conquered by the sword, until today, have a sizeable percentage of non-Muslims, like Iraq, Egypt and Syria, unlike those countries in which Islam entered through trade and preaching as in Indonesia, Malaysia and parts of Africa and south India.

Once non-Muslims become citizens of the Caliphate, they pay a tax which is known as *jizya*. This tax can have other names, as was done in the time of Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ when the people of Bahrain requested that the *jizya* be given another name. The money collected from this tax is redistributed amongst the poor non-Muslim citizens and is not for consumption of the rulers. This is partially why Christians in the early Caliphate preferred Muslim rule to Byzantine rule. The

tax paid by non-Muslims is less than the *zakāt* paid by Muslims, with poor non-Muslims being exempt from paying and indeed are the beneficiaries from the distribution of the *jizya*, carried out yearly.

Minorities from other religions are also exempt from military service and have the full protection of the caliph from other Muslims and non-Muslims. If the caliph is unable to protect them then they are exempt from any type of taxation. Non-Muslim children living within the caliphate are not constrained to learn the Qur'ān or study Muslim texts since the caliphate cannot proselytise to children and those who have not reached maturity and fulfilling the other conditions to be legally obligated, as discussed in Chapter Four.

Non-Muslim minorities are exempt from the majority of *Sharīᶜa* Law and free to follow their own laws within their own communities with the exception of universal laws like the prohibition of murder or when their transactions interfere with Muslim transactions. They can, for instance, trade in alcohol and pork and other practices, prohibited for Muslims, as long as they are carried out discreetly and in the non-Muslim quarters of the city. The caliphate does not intervene in any of this except for the purposes of trade taxes.

The non-Muslims have the option of going to Muslim judges to resolve their civil disputes or can set up their own courts. None of these types of rights exist in the modern secular state. Non-Muslims can even take the caliph himself to court to resolve disputes, as occurred in the time of Caliph ᶜAlī ﷺ. A Jewish citizen wanted to test the credibility of the Islamic judiciary and made a claim against Caliph ᶜAlī ﷺ. The judgement ruled in favour of the Jew and Caliph ᶜAlī ﷺ was about to compensate him when the Jew confessed he had made the whole thing up in order to test Muslim justice, with

the result that the Jew entered Islam.

When Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ entered Jerusalem after it had been conquered by Muslims, he saw a group of blind beggars and enquired who they were and why were they begging. He was informed that they were Christian beggars that had reached old age and were unable to earn a living. Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ immediately ordered that they be given a pension from the state funds and said, "We do not take *jizya* from them in their youth and leave them to rot in their old age."

If unbelievers from another nation are a threat to the security of Muslims, then the Muslim leaders are commanded by the Qurʾān to carry out pre-emptive *Jihād* or take *jizya* from them. This is what God mentions in the following verse, ﴾*Fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, nor comply with what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor embrace the religion of truth from among those who were given the Scripture, until they pay the tax, willingly submitting, fully humbled*﴿ [Qurʾān 9:29]. This verse is sometimes interpreted by detractors of Islam as saying that the Qurʾān humiliates minorities, when the clear context of the verse relates to vitriolic aggression against the lands of Islam. Leaders are commanded to resist non-Muslim nations that are aggressive—not peaceful tribal peoples or many native nations—but rather the aggressive imperial regimes. God says in the Qurʾān, ﴾*Prepare against them what you believers can of military power and cavalry to deter Allah's enemies and your enemies as well as other enemies unknown to you but known to Allah. Whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be paid to you in full and you will not be wronged*﴿ [Qurʾān 8:60].

If treaties are broken and there is treachery against the Muslim government then permission to fight is also granted

to the leader; God says in the Qur'ān, ﴾*But once the Sacred Months have passed, kill the polytheists who violated their treaties wherever you find them, capture them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them on every way. But if they repent, perform prayers, and pay alms-tax, then set them free. Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful*﴿ [Qur'ān 9:5].

These verses and similar types of verses address a Muslim leader, giving him divine guidance regarding military affairs. The problem with terrorist and vigilante groups, who though they may have valid grievance, is when they abuse these and similar verses for their own end and take unsanctioned initiatives when they feel governments are not doing enough for their nation or rights. In many cases, these terrorist groups exploit young people, who may also have legitimate complaint, by distorting the Qur'ān and Sunna. As we have unfortunately seen only too often, in many instances, government agencies have a secret hand in funding and training such groups.

Suicide bombings have no origin in Islam, neither in the Qur'ān, Sunna or the classic works of jurisprudence. Suicide tactics were employed first amongst mainstream Muslims in the Iraq-Iran war on the Iranian side in the 1980s and then introduced by the Assad regime, which was an ally of Iran, into the Palestinian struggle. This tactic was then adopted by various Wahhābī terrorist groups that targeted civilians, shrines, Ṣūfī groups, and then large-scale terrorist activities. Such illegitimate forms of '*Jihād*' distort true *Jihād* under the name of *Jihād*.

6.7 SLAVERY

Slavery was a phenomenon that predated the revelation of

the Qur'ān and the Arabs were entrenched in it like many of the nations of the world at that time. All the verses relating to slavery must be understood in that context. People already had slaves and some of them had sexual relations with those slaves. Enquiring about relationships between a slave owner and a slave woman, the Qur'ān revealed the permissibility of 'what the right hand possesses.'

An example of one of these verses is, ﴾*Also forbidden are married women—except female captives in your possession. This is Allah's commandment to you. Lawful to you are all those you have consummated marriage with their due dowries. It is permissible to be mutually gracious regarding the set dowry. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise*﴿ [Qur'ān 4:24]. This verse gave permission for the master to have consensual intercourse with his slave woman though this is viewed highly contentiously. Let us look at the backdrop and historical context of this ruling in the Qur'ān.

Islam abolished all forms of taking slaves except one. Arabs and other nations hitherto would enslave free people and anyone who they could traffic and sell into the global slave trade which included kidnappings and plunder. Islam prohibited all these forms of slavery with the exception of one, that is where the ruler has the option to enslave captives of war from a people who would enslave their captives in turn. This option was left open because of the prevalence of war mongering nations enslaving Muslim captives.

Whether Muslims enslave combatants and those with them, or ransom them, or set them free, or execute them are options for a ruler depending on the circumstances and the customs. The verdict given in the time of the Prophet ﷺ regarding combatants of the Jewish tribe Banū Qurayẓa was from these four options. Instead of seeking the judgement of

the Prophet ﷺ—who would have been merciful—the Banū Qurayẓa leadership insisted on the judgement of Sa'd b. Mu'ādh ؓ. Sa'd ؓ declared that the combatants should be killed in accordance with the Jewish law in Deuteronomy. This verdict was given on the insistence of the tribe's leadership that Sa'd make the judgement, who gave it in accordance with the Jewish law and not the Prophet ﷺ who would most likely have ransomed the captives as he did in other battles.

It is interesting to compare the Muslim understanding of treatment of prisoners with that of the Bible. In Deuteronomy, for example, it says, "If it (the people of the city) does not submit to you peacefully, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the Lord your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword. You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the Lord your God has given you" [Deuteronomy 20:12-14].

Despite the one option of enslaving captives of war being left open with other methods of enslavement prohibited, the Muslims were encouraged to free slaves. Additional rulings on prohibiting slave beating, obligating the same quality of food and clothing to be given to the slave as the master wears and not over burdening the slave with work were also made. If any of these rights were violated, the slave, in principle, could appeal against his master in court and have the master rebuked if an injustice was carried out.

Enslavement therefore, to Muslims, entails something quite different from the Atlantic slave trade of Africans by western colonial powers or the malpractices of Arab and African merchants in enslaving free people. Enslaving captives of war may sound inhumane and no different from the slave

trade of free people, but in fact they are poles apart. A power that decides to incarcerate war captives obviously threatens their civil human rights. It is sadly common to hear of prisoners kept away from sunlight in solitary confinement and in some cases subjected to torture, like water boarding. One just needs to read the reports on Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib prisons or the treatment of prisoners of war in China or Japan during World War II, to mention a few. The option given by the Qur'ān to rulers to enslave instead of imprisoning and torturing prisoners of war is more humane. The word 'enslave' be a strange sounding concept but the connotation is totally different from the illegal forms, where free people are enslaved for trade, the new word for which is human trafficking.

The enslaving of prisoners of war relates to the capture of warmongers and their like, where enslavement is one option. They can be otherwise released, ransomed, or executed depending on the nature of their war crimes. The likes of Adolf Hitler, Slobodan Milosevic, Tony Blair, George Bush, and innumerable other psychopathic murderers would be subject to these laws. Enslavement as detailed in the Qur'ān means, unlike those in Guantanamo, they will see daylight, eat wholesome food, wear fine clothing, have one third of the day to themselves, the possibility of buying their own freedom or even being freed by their slave master simply because the Qur'ān exhorts Muslims in many verses to free their slaves. Muslim rulers today will unlikely take that option since non-Muslims have ceased enslaving Muslims, not to mention the numerous covenants to abolish slavery.

When a woman marries her slave, he is automatically freed. If a man and his slave woman have consenting sex, as this is what the verses relating to 'what the right hand possesses' refer to, and she becomes pregnant, then she automatically

becomes his wife and not his slave.

Slaves are also freed when a Muslim takes an oath and later does not fulfil that oath, or kills someone by manslaughter and as a compensation frees a slave, or if the person commits other religious penalties, they are commanded to free slaves in various places in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān sets down regulations, rights and means by which slavery, for the most part, is abrogated and the option of enslaving war prisoners is left to the discretion of a leader only if he faces a crisis whereby the unbelievers are enslaving Muslims or worse. Even though this discretionary option is left open for the rulers, it does not mean that the ruler will necessarily exercise that right.

These slaves who would be termed prisoners of war today were given the title of *riqq* which means 'softness' because of the soft way in which they were treated, and the many rights endowed upon them by Islam. After the battle of Badr, the first battle in Muslim history, Muslims were not permitted to tie, beat or torture the prisoners, and any of them able to teach a Muslim how to read or write were set free. Yet this was during extreme circumstances when the Quraysh tribe were violently hostile to Muslims, not dissimilar to 'Israel' today. The books of Islamic jurisprudence have a chapter on 'Setting Slaves Free' but not a single chapter on 'Enslaving'.

After the Black Lives Matter protests, an Islam-hating bigot attempted to implicate Muslims in the slave trade as understood in the Anglo-Euro world by stating that the Prophet ﷺ kept slaves. What he failed to mention was that the Prophet ﷺ bought slaves only to free them. This is why some of his biographers say that the Prophet ﷺ bought sixty-three slaves in his life and set free all sixty-three, equivalent to freeing one slave for every year of his sixty-three years on Earth.

Such are the misrepresentations of fact that aptly named Islamophobes choose to distort. Another states that the Prophet ﷺ struck the chest of his wife ʿĀʾisha ؓ, thereby insinuating wife beating. In fact, it was the Prophet's way ﷺ to lovingly tap the chests of his male companions or people of his household when admonishing them regarding something.

In another Ḥadīth, ʿĀʾisha ؓ herself states that the Prophet ﷺ never struck or beat a woman or child. The Ḥadīth in question above however states that ʿĀʾisha ؓ said she was hurt when struck on the chest as when she was admonished by the Prophet ﷺ giving the polemicist mileage to conclude that 'the prophet beat his child bride', not accounting for the fact that ʿĀʾisha ؓ was not a child but a very intelligent lady who related more than a third of the teachings of Islam. She never viewed this as wife beating, rather she had a very loving relationship with the Prophet ﷺ, such that she was the last person the Prophet ﷺ spoke to and he passed away in her arms while in her chamber and was buried in that same chamber.

The same Lady ʿĀʾisha ؓ states:

> "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ when he was alone with his wives was the gentlest person, and the most generous with laughing and smiling."[108]

There are many similar narrations with such generous statements from Lady ʿĀʾisha ؓ, all of which are ignored by Islamophobes who choose to take the one Ḥadīth in isolation and ignore anything else that contradicts their claim.

6.8 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Let us look at the issue of corporal punishment in Islam, known as *ḥudūd*, which is deemed by critics of Islam as evidence of the inhumane and draconian nature of the Islamic penal code. The overwhelming majority of the *ḥudūd* are only applied to Muslims and like much of the *Sharīʿa* Law, as explained above, it does not apply to non-Muslims, who are largely unaffected by these laws.

Corporal punishment in Islam is deemed barbaric because it is conceptualised as being ancient and harsh. However, a punishment being ancient does not mean that it is necessarily wrong; the jail cell and imprisonment for criminals, for example, is one of the most ancient punishments in human history. Furthermore, a punishment for severe crimes must be harsh and severe for it to be a deterrent, and if not a deterrent then a means of restoring some semblance of balance between right and wrong through the meting out of justice.

A more subtle point would be that total justice is never given on earth for many crimes even after someone is sentenced for that crime. Imprisonment, blood money, capital or other punishments for the murder of a person can never bring back the life of the person killed. The very nature of some crimes must allow the conclusion that total justice can never be fulfilled except by God who will adjudicate on the Day of Judgement and restore everything to its rightful balance. Innocent children killed by hapless and soulless men, whether dictators like Hitler killing innocent Jewish children, Ariel Sharon butchering innocent Arabs and indeed Muslims who with their distorted, vengeful understanding of what Islam actually teaches killing innocents in the name of Islam; all will be fairly dealt with by God.

While we are still on earth, God's revelation of the final law for humanity in the Qur'ān and its explanation in the Sunna of the Prophet ﷺ legislates some severe punishments which, although harsh, help restore balance to an injustice done and provide a clear deterrent to would-be criminals. The punishments are legislated to safeguard the essentials of human nature like life, wealth, the mind, lineage and reputation.

While atheists and others may mention the punishments by way of summary, many of the radical Islamist ideologues will be wholly ignorant of the strict conditions for actually carrying out any of these corporal *ḥudūd* punishments. Similarly, there will be those who call for their cancellation or suspension—even though they are not applied correctly in places that profess such laws today—mainly due to an embarrassment kindled by western sentiments regarding *ḥudūd*. Amputating the hand for theft is legislated in the Qur'ān, but like many matters it has various conditions that are actually rarely fulfilled and carried out. If someone is guilty of a crime but the judge cannot have the requirements of the *ḥudūd* fulfilled, then a discretional punishment is permitted and the *ḥudūd* is not carried out. The punishments being harsh has no real relation to ancient or modern as exemplified by the electric chair, poisonous injection and many other modern punishments. The difference is that unlike *ḥudūd* punishments proscribed by *Sharīʿa* Law these modern chastisements have far less stringent conditions.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Avert the *ḥudūd* with doubts."[109] This rule is applied to all types of corporal punishment, so that if there is any type of valid doubt then the *ḥudūd* punishment is avoided. Amputation of the hand is legislated to protect people's hard-earned wealth, but it is not carried out in times of famine as the conditions are not fulfilled. One

year in the time of Caliph ʿUmar ﵁ people were suffering from famine. ʿUmar ﵁ ordered the amputation of the hand of a thief not to be carried out as the conditions were not fulfilled. Similarly, the amputation of the hand of the thief is not applied if he steals food to eat or something that is valueless. Indeed, the caliph cannot permit the amputation of a thief's hand if the caliph is not observing his own obligation to provide basic food needs and bare essentials for all citizens. Jurists have also stipulated a threshold value of stolen goods for amputation to be valid, based on a prophetic report, meaning that if someone stole things valued at less than the threshold amount—which is approximately the value of fifty grams of silver—amputation would not be exacted, but rather the government administers other punishments like a fine or a jail sentence determined at the discretion of the judge.

The general rule is when the conditions are not met, yet the judge has determined that the defendant is guilty but is unable to find the *ḥudūd* conditions to carry out the punishment, then the Emir can give other punishments which are less severe than *ḥudūd*. This goes toward answering that common question as to what happens if there are no witnesses to a rape case and the defendant denies all allegations and yet there is video evidence, fingerprints, DNA and numerous other police proofs that could convict the defendant. The response is that such evidence would not be disregarded by the judge of an Islamic court and even though it might be insufficient to carry out an Islamic corporal punishment it would still be sufficient to convict the person of the crime and give them a jail sentence at the judge's discretion.

In the case of theft, the conditions for the corporal severance of the hand to be carried out is that the property stolen must have been in a private protected area and not in public or openly accessible to the public, and too, that the per-

son stealing must have been observed by a minimum of two eyewitnesses who observed him stealing the said property or merchandise. These two conditions are extremely unlikely to occur and if and when they did, the eyewitnesses themselves must be thoroughly scrutinised, interviewed and cross-examined. If after all of these procedures, additional doubts remain, for example if the alleged thief was handing suspected stolen goods to someone on the road at the time of stealing, causing doubt on whether he was passing it on to the person on the road or it was being passed to him by the person on the road, such stringencies and these types of doubt are liable to render the *ḥudūd* inapplicable and are covered in more detail in books of jurisprudence and works relating to Islamic governance.

If someone is observed breaking into a house via the security cameras of that house and seen stealing from the house, it would be insufficient evidence to apply the corporal punishment of hand amputation, but would not mean that other forms of punishment could not be meted out by the government. The government however is limited in the types of punishments that it can give. The range of punishments proscribed by Islamic law are limited to imprisonment, fining, banishment and a very limited number of floggings in certain discretional circumstances.

It is very easy for a criminal to avoid *ḥudūd* punishment given the leeway in *Sharīʿa* Law. Claiming hunger at the time of stealing, for example, may impel the judge to follow the advice of the Prophet ﷺ and drop the punishment if there is any reasonable doubt. Even though the accused may not be given the *ḥudūd* punishment, it does not mean they will avoid other types of punishment, if it is known they have actually committed that particular crime through sufficient evidence of a different nature. This is why, in the annals of history,

actual *ḥudūd* punishments were rarely carried out because the conditions were seldom fulfilled. That is of course prior to the 1900s and the introduction of nation states after the collapse of the Caliphate, and the emergence of exclusive interpretations of *Sharī'a* Law proffered by the Saudi-Wahhābī monarchy, the Iranian Theocracy of the Shī'a clergy or the tribal interpretations of Taliban. Beating women with wires, for instance, for not covering themselves is an unheard Islamic corporal punishment or forcing all men to grow beards and punishing those who do not. These are just some of the strange interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence given by tribal Muslims and quite alien to the thirteen-hundred-year history of the Caliphate with all its ups and downs.

It shocks many people to hear that stoning for adultery is not actually found in the Qur'ān and this is because they have been made to believe otherwise. It is true the punishment for adultery is found in the Ḥadīth and is authentically reported, but the contextualising of a few key factors is always missing in modern discourse.

Firstly, the punishment of stoning someone to death is only carried out in the event of a public display of obscenity whose proof is the requirement of four witnesses who have observed the action of adultery explicitly. If any aspect of the witness statement contradicts another's then the entire case is thrown out and the witnesses are flogged themselves for false allegation. The defendant also has the right to review the case and scrutinise the witness statements. The key aspect of these allegations to be substantiated is through proof of a public display of obscenity and as such, along with laws relating to adultery and fornication can be deemed as public order laws.

Secondly, stoning for adultery was only carried out in a few instances in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, once on the

insistence by Jewish Rabbis to apply the law on Jewish citizens in Madina[110]. Another case involved a man and woman who insisted that the punishment be carried out on themselves. The Prophet ﷺ turned them away three times and on the fourth time asked whether they had any mental health problems. When it was discovered they were perfectly sane the penalty was carried out[111].

Thirdly, the stoning is stopped if the one sentenced or admits to adultery runs away as soon as the stoning starts. The purpose of the stoning happening in an open ground is to allow that option. If the person runs away, the crowd does not chase after them and the judge halts the stoning due to doubt.

Fourthly, the stoning being carried out in public does not mean that it should occur in the local park or a football stadium as so called 'ISIS' and other groups do. It simply means a governmental location in which some selected members of the public are invited to attend and observe the punishment being carried out fairly.

Fifthly, adultery and fornication are taken seriously because of the harmful effects they have on society. Those ills include abortion, the abandoning of children, children not knowing their father, the break-down of families, immodest behaviour, poverty, dysfunctionality leading to deep psychological problems in children, prostitution, human trafficking, the exploitation of women, assault and abuse, murders and revenge killings, and crimes of passion. Just a little research regarding the illegitimate births of Ted Bundy and Thomas Hamilton who carried out the tragic Dunblane shootings, and the psychopathic behaviour of the likes of Rose West and many others shows how it was exacerbated by their illegitimate backgrounds.

"If there is a clear public display of obscenity," and here obscenity just means sex performed in the public where four or more people observe the male penis actually penetrating the female vagina and if the people doing this are married; then and only then is the corporal punishment carried out. If the man and woman are observed naked together, ostensibly having sex, but no one witnessing the male organ penetrating the vagina, or the couple are performing non-vaginal sexual acts and four or more witnesses observe them due to the public nature of these obscenities, stoning is still not the judgement given by the courts. Even if a married man commits adultery and is observed by four witnesses, the act must be reported and the witness reports congruous and non-contradicting. If these and many other conditions are not fulfilled, then no actual stoning occurs.

A flogging given to a bachelor who commits fornication has the same stringent conditions for those of adultery except the punishment is lighter for the bachelor in comparison to a married person. If the bachelor has been witnessed fornicating in public view sufficiently for four witnesses to see the act, he will be flogged eighty times. But this flogging occurs with a small cane that is as long as the forearm with the girth that of a small finger. Secondly, when the flogging is administered the flogger cannot raise his arm higher than if he had a book under his armpit without the book falling out from underneath. Thirdly, the clothes of the bachelor fornicator are not removed, and if it is a female the action is done away from the public and she is made to sit down also.

It should be noted with regard to Islamic punishments that the word 'flogging' or 'lashing' will actually only have the meaning explicated above, and does not mean the type of whipping or lashing that leaves cuts, marks and bruises such as the cat o' nine tails used by the British Army.

Another point that people overlook is that further to the striking method mentioned in Islamic jurisprudence, with the hand or *miswāk* being raised no higher than that if there were a book under the armpit it would not fall out, striking on the face and head is explicitly forbidden with no exception to this in Islamic law. This is why sports in which people strike the head and face are also prohibited and even on the battlefield in legitimate *Jihād* the believer must avoid the disfigurement of the face unless absolutely unavoidable.

Similarly, in Islamic tradition, striking is also prohibited on the soft parts of the body which are easily bruised like the private organs or the stomach. If a person strikes a woman or child, by Islamic law, that child or woman can have that person taken to the judge and have him struck in a similar manner, or whatever punishment the judge deems fit. The ruler also has the right to ban all forms of striking even for discipline, as explained earlier and this is the correct position today. Muslims in many places today—like many Madrasas in the Indian subcontinent and other places—are ignorant of these regulations and carry out violations against children all the while thinking such violence is permitted. Such teachers are wholly ignorant of Islam and have even fabricated a Ḥadīth stating that wherever the teacher's rod strikes you that part will never burn in Hell. Such is our dilemma.

6.9 CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR APOSTATES

The capital punishment for apostacy in Islam is often cited by critics of Islam. It is established through a solitary Ḥadīth and according to them contradicts the verse of the Qur'ān which says, ﴾*Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So, whoever renounces*

A - Ref. Sunan Abu Dawood - Kitab-ul-Hudood Hadith - 4339

false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing hand-hold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing﴾ [Qur'ān 2:256]. There are many considerations that are typically never mentioned regarding this law by those intent on disparaging Islam and its adherents.

Firstly, death for apostacy is a punishment that is only administered by a Muslim ruler governing by *Sharīʿa* Law in Muslim countries.

Secondly, it is a punishment so established that people must be clear about the choice they made and do not enter Islam deceived, with doubt or half-heartedly. So, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and others will therefore not enter Islam lightly, through peer pressure or coercion if they know such a severe penalty for leaving Islam exists.

Thirdly, a woman or child are not liable to be punished for apostacy. This is because the underlying reason for punishments is not the choice the person makes nor curbing their right to make that choice but the underlying nature of the choice made, which in the case of a man, is different from that of a woman or child which is further elaborated upon in the fourth consideration.

Fourthly, apostacy in a Muslim country for men is akin to treason. Like some countries have treason laws to protect the identity and unity of a nation, the Muslim country applies this to grown men who renounce their religion and who remain in that Muslim country. The judiciary does not prevent them from leaving and declaring their disbelief elsewhere but when a man, who is sane, declares his apostacy in a Muslim country it effectively invalidates his marriage to a Muslim woman and severs the kinship with his own children and parents, and causes unnecessary commotion and friction in the society.

For the above reasons the renouncer of the religion is liable to capital punishment and for similar reasons to those underlying treason; that of causing unnecessary civil strife and social unrest. This is not found in the nature of women and children but is potentially there in the nature of man and so therefore the punishment is applied to them after being arrested and given the chance to recant and repent. The man has the option to leave the country and renounce Islam, or renounce Islam and keep it his private affair (as some did do in the past and present), or to privately disseminate his views. When he decides however to openly announce his renunciation of Islam within the midst of an Islamic country it is taken to be an act of aggression, disruption and treason.

There is no law for treason in *Sharīʿa*, even if a person insults or denounces the caliph and the state, or if he burns the flag, but apostacy is seen as treason simply because of the political repercussions in the context of the man leaving Islam. As stated previously, the implications are that it could potentially disintegrate an entire family and he could even be a military threat to the body politic, eschewing the option he had of leaving or keeping his beliefs a personal matter.

People's personal beliefs and personal lives are not interfered with by a true Muslim caliphate and people are free to do what they want in their homes and private dwellings in terms of their own personal actions. In this regard, the government is prohibited from interfering into people's private lives as is related in the story when Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ was passing by a house where people, Muslims in fact, were making merry, drinking and partying. ʿUmar ﷺ decided to check what was happening inside the house by climbing over the walls and opening the door. In one narration it states that the person accompanying the Caliph ﷺ, and in another someone from inside the house, quoted the following verse to him,

﴾*O believers! Avoid many suspicions, for indeed, some suspicions are sinful. And do not spy...*﴿ [Qur'ān 49:12]. Caliph ʿUmar ﷺ immediately left the house and left the inhabitants to their own devices[112]. This exemplifies the fact that *Sharīʿa* Law interferes only in private issues that affect the wider society, like murder and similar cases, but when it comes to what people do in their private lives *Sharīʿa* Law cannot be enforced at all.

Many of the laws apply to the public display of vices like drinking alcohol and fornication. The actions of private individuals however are quite different to those cartels that procure prostitution, sell alcohol or promote black markets for all kinds of vice, all of which would be subject to the law as their premises would not be deemed as private property.

6.10 HOMOSEXUALITY IN ISLAM

Homosexuality is prohibited in Islam and Muslims are prohibited by God from such behaviour. An Emir can only interfere where there is public display and the severe penalties applying only to the witnessed sexual act. This is why Lawrence Krauss's question regarding two men who go into the desert and commit the homosexual act in the open is flawed simply because if no one witnesses the act there is no application of *ḥudūd*. The absence of *ḥudūd* does not mean that other punishments cannot apply. They are at the discretion of the ruler who looks for the greater benefit of society. Incest, bestiality, and other sexual practices are prohibited in *Sharīʿa* Law but the *ḥudūd* can only apply with admission of guilt or on the testimony of witnesses who have been thoroughly scrutinised. Discretional law is much more limited in its scope and can differ from society to society and in different eras.

The claim that there is a 'gay gene' or that it is 'found in nature' does not mean a thing should be deemed as morally correct. Many things are 'found in nature' and yet we humans refuse to do them even though we can. Also, children are not born with sexuality and therefore to say 'children are born gay' is absurd. Human will-power or self-restraint is deliberately elicited in Islam by fasting during the daylight hours of the month of Ramaḍān when Muslims restrain themselves from food, drink, sex and many other urges. It is this will-power that is strengthened through worship and self-restraint. There is no scientific evidence of people 'being born gay' but rather is a pseudo-science peddled from the scientifically inaccurate Kinsey Report. A genetic analysis of almost half a million people concluded there is no single "gay gene", while genetic factors, it argued, accounted for, at most, 25% of same-sex behaviour. The study states, "There is no conclusive degree to which nature or nurture influences how a gay or lesbian person behaves." A BBC article states:

> "David Curtis, honorary professor at the UCL Genetics Institute, University College London, said: 'This study clearly shows that there is no such thing as a "gay gene". There is no genetic variant in the population which has any substantial effect on sexual orientation. Rather, what we see is that there are very large numbers of variants which have extremely modest associations. Even if homosexuality is not genetically determined, as this study shows, that does not mean that it is not in some way an innate and indispensable part of an individual's personality.'
>
> Zeke Stokes, from the LGBT media advocacy organisation GLAAD, said: 'This new research re-confirms the long-established understanding that there is no conclusive degree to which nature or nurture influence how a gay or lesbian person behaves.'"[113]

Islam's guidelines for married heterosexual couples and the certain restrictions to their sexual practice, like the prohibition on sex during menses, lochia or on anal sex are intended health benefits for them, a subject ignored by advocates of Neo-liberalism. Married couples have the duty to prevent illness and restrictions on fornication, debauchery, bestiality, adultery and many other vices, similarly protect them from their harmful effects. Higher rates of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, sexually transmitted illnesses (anal papilloma/HPV, gonorrhoea, syphilis, and chlamydia), not to mention certain cancers are found more commonly among those performing the homosexual act and living that lifestyle, so it is for their own good that Islam has prohibited these acts. Even though the prohibition is addressed to Muslims and not to non-Muslims unless they adopt Islam, the non-Muslims would in any case be prohibited from carrying out the homosexual act in public (something very unlikely anyhow) while residing in a country governed by Islamic law.

6.11 THE MARRIAGE OF LADY ʿĀ'ISHA ﷺ

The marriage of ʿĀ'isha ﷺ to the Prophet ﷺ was, at least according to the solitary report in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, contracted at the age of six and consummated when she was nine has been a major source of contention, grievance and polemics to Western atheist critics over many decades. This attempt to besmirch the character of the Prophet ﷺ is used after everything else fails. The standards by which the morality of any marriage is judged as good or bad can only be determined by the divine, otherwise the moral standards are left to the societal norms and atheists would have to make the latter a reference point for their morality not the former.

By human conventions of that time, the marriage was fine and was not a source of any disparagement in the way the marriage of Zaynab ؓ was made a controversy and to which the Qur'ān responded.

In case of the marriage of the Prophet ﷺ to Zaynab ؓ, it is often deliberately misquoted in the saying that the Prophet ﷺ 'married his own daughter-in-law', which is utterly untrue. This marriage was controversial because Arabs deemed any adopted child as akin to the adopting couple's own conceived child even if they had not suckled the breast milk of his adopting mother. Zayd ؓ was a young man when the Prophet ﷺ bought him as a slave and whom he later freed, after which time Zayd ؓ stayed at the house of the Prophet ﷺ. When Zayd's father eventually found him in Makka—he had erstwhile been kidnapped by slave traders—Zayd ؓ was faced with the choice of remaining in Makkah with the Prophet ﷺ or returning with his father. Zayd ؓ chose to remain with the Prophet ﷺ and subsequently became known as Zayd son of Muḥammad ﷺ. Later the Prophet ﷺ arranged for Zayd ؓ to marry the his ﷺ cousin, Zaynab ؓ, which he did. Later, when Zayd and Zaynab ؓ divorced and when the Prophet ﷺ took Zaynab as his wife, he was criticised particularly by the Quraysh for negating their tribal tradition of adjudging an adopted son as a real son. Verses of the Qur'ān were then revealed which effectively abolished this cultural practice and permitted the Prophet ﷺ to marry Zaynab ؓ.

Scurrilous reports that claim the Prophet ﷺ desired Zaynab ؓ in a lustful way before she was divorced are generally rejected by theologians, as al-Taftāzānī and al-Parhārwī mention in *Sharḥ al-ʿAqā'id* and *al-Nibrās* respectively, and a solitary report makes very little sense as the Prophet ﷺ grew up with Zaynab ؓ, who was his first cousin, and knew her through childhood and adulthood, well before the laws of

ḥijāb were revealed. The marriage to ʿĀʾisha ﷺ, on the other hand, is only brought up because international marriage conventions have changed in recent history and some polemicists seem to think it a difficult point for Muslims to answer.

To respond, one would have to say that marriage in ancient Arabia, and Islam at that time, was consummated with women, not children, with women deemed such once they reached their menses. Boys and girls were deemed adults as soon as they were pubescent. *Sharīʿa* Law confirms this adult status on them in the same way that prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage (if they have the funds) become an obligation at puberty.

As any knowledgeable anthropologist will know, modern standards and conceptions are not to be superimposed on the norms and customs of ancient cultures. Women were considered as women in those times once they had their periods, something which coincided with the time of mental maturity also. The counter argument to this is that if ʿĀʾisha ﷺ was a woman at this point and not a child why did she mention that she was playing with dolls just preceding the marriage contract. The response is simply that in 7TH century Arabia, mobile phones, laptops, TV and other forms of technology and entertainment were unavailable and even young women were known to play with dolls and swings, as was found in Victorian England amongst some of the aristocracy. The mental maturity of ʿĀʾisha ﷺ is demonstrated by her numerous Ḥadīth narrations, her knowledge and transmission of a large corpus of the Islamic religion, her leading of an army and making major decisions and consultations for the caliphate. Yet, when all other arguments against Islam are depleted, the New Atheists, polemical Christians and their like insist that the marriage of ʿĀʾisha ﷺ is a controversial issue and tarnishes the character of the Prophet ﷺ even though not

one of his contemporaries, friend or foe, actually brought this up in a negative manner.

As an addendum to the above, the following items should be kept as 'food for thought'; firstly, that the Qur'ān does not permit child marriage anywhere. In a desperate attempt, some people cite the commentary of Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ to a verse in the Qur'ān where the interpretation of a marriage contract with a minor is mentioned. What they fail to mention when citing reports of this type is that the marriage contract in some parts of the Islamic world was commonly performed as a ritual act between a father agreeing to give his daughter in marriage to a boy—usually the same age—once the child becomes an adult. Once that boy becomes an adult, he makes the choice to fulfil the marriage contract and move in with his proposed spouse; something highlighted in the following Ḥadīth:

> ʿĀ'isha ﷺ reported that a girl came to her and said, "My father married me to his nephew in order to raise his social standing, and I did not want this marriage." ʿĀ'isha ﷺ said, "Sit here until the Prophet ﷺ comes." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came and she told him about the girl. The Prophet ﷺ sent for her father, then he gave the girl the choice of what to do. She said, "O messenger of God, I have accepted what my father did, but I wanted to prove something to other women."[114]

There are numerous other reports which mention that daughters have the final choice.

A second consideration totally ignored by denigrators is that the actual age of ʿĀ'isha ﷺ has been disputed; a not unusual factor when it comes to biographical details of dates of births and deaths in those early times. The report cited by

Islamophobes in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is an isolated one which must be put in context with the many Ḥadīth which show ʿĀ'isha ﷺ to be a mature woman at the time of marriage. The discrepancy is down to determining the age difference between ʿĀ'isha ﷺ and her half-sister Asmā' ﷺ, where some historians have suggested a ten-year difference, others have said something else. Asmā' ﷺ was born around 595 CE and that would mean ʿĀ'isha ﷺ was born around 605 CE. That would mean ʿĀ'isha ﷺ was around twenty-seven years old when the Prophet ﷺ passed away making it implausible that she was nine at the time of moving in with the Prophet ﷺ as she lived less than a decade with him. Ibn Kathīr, the famous historian, writes:

> "She, her sister ʿĀ'isha, her father Abū Bakr, her grandfather Abū ʿAtīq, her son ʿAbd Allah, and her husband al-Zubayr were Companions—God bless them. She participated in the Battle of Yarmūk with her son and her husband, and she is ten years older than her sister ʿĀ'isha."[115]

Asmā' ﷺ died in 692 CE at the age of 97 (100 lunar years) and ʿĀ'isha ﷺ died in the year 678 CE and her age would have been seventy-three. If this were not enough to satisfy the detractors, there is another Ḥadīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* where a companion uses the age 'seven' to mean the older age of fifteen or thereabouts since the counting was done in that way when counting teenage years; disregarding the first eight years because eight was considered a whole number. So, if someone said, 'When I was seven, I would lead my tribe in prayer', they meant, 'When I was seven and if you add the first eight years also' it would mean they were fifteen. Otherwise, any lay Muslim will tell you that a seven-year-old

cannot lead the congregational prayer, and thus it means that the counting of early years, what we refer to as teenage years, was different then.

Even if someone refuses to accept these points and still refers to the marriage as 'child marriage' they are simply refuted by the fact that in pre-modern times pubescent girls were welcomed into society as women and had a mental maturity evoked and in accordance with those types of societies and the lifestyle. Now that times have changed and society has different conventions, even though pubescent boys and girls are deemed as adults in *Sharīʿa* Law (which obligates prayer and fasting) the governments and rulers can ban early marriages due to other considerations like lack of maturity and changes in society and social conventions. It is also clear from the Qur'ān that marriage is between adults, where God says, ﴾*If you fear you might fail to give orphan women their due rights if you were to marry them, then marry other women of your choice—two, three, or four. But if you are afraid you will fail to maintain justice, then content yourselves with one or those bondwomen in your possession. This way you are less likely to commit injustice*﴿ [Qur'ān 4:3]. In this verse, God commands men who are able to marry orphans, but these orphans are those who have grown into women and are no longer children.

6.12 POLYGAMY

It is worthy of note too that the Qur'ān does not permit polygamy if the man is likely to be unjust. In such a case the Qur'ān commands him to 'marry only one' and is the only religious book to give such a command. The context of polygamy was also that the ancient Arabs would marry more than

one woman, sometimes a dozen or two dozen at one time, then unfairly divorcing them all at once. The Qur'ān then prohibited men marrying more than four wives and only permitted more than one if they were all treated fairly. If women were treated unfairly by a man, the Prophet ﷺ warned that such a man would be resurrected half paralysed on the Day of Judgement. One further context to the verse on polygamy is that the women being mentioned often had no dependents or were orphans, so the Qur'ān exhorted men who could do so to take care of them.

6.13 THE *ḤIJĀB*

The *ḥijāb* is a requirement mentioned in the Qur'ān but is viewed by some today as female oppression and a reason for opposing Islam. The opposition to the *ḥijāb* is exacerbated by some strict interpretations of the *ḥijāb*. The same people will most likely ignore the story of Yvonne Ridley with the Taliban and its very positive outcome.

Here are a few considerations on the matter: the laws of *ḥijāb* also apply to men in that they too must cover their bodies from their kneecaps to above the navel in public and not display or wear tight, revealing clothes around that region. Men are also commanded by the Qur'ān to lower their gaze and not to stare at women unnecessarily if they are uncovered or revealing anything, especially with lewdness. Men are also prohibited from touching women even without desire, with the exception of close family members like mother, sister, niece, or daughter and then only in appropriate places like a shake of the hand. The man only can touch his wife with intimacy. It is also prohibited for a man to be alone with a woman he is unrelated to in a room which is not accessible to

the public. Considering all of those prohibitions, the *ḥijāb* for a woman consists of only three obligations; to cover the body and hair in public with an *ʿabāya* garment and head scarf which does not reveal the skin and contours of the body, not touching any male unrelated to her, and not being alone with a man who is unrelated to her.

The prohibition in a Ḥadīth on perfuming the body before leaving the house is in the context of wearing perfume to attract males for illicit relationships. This obligation in the Qurʾān addresses believing women and does not address the unbelieving women. It is the clear election of those believing women, as it is the choice of believing men to cover what is an obligation to cover, to show modesty, lower the gaze, to control sensual desires and not be alone with a member of the opposite sex. Exemptions to these rules such as between a doctor and patient exist since Islam does not prohibit life-saving measures and necessities like blood transfusion (and, in extremis, even eating pork to save one's own life).

The *ḥijāb* is a commitment to modesty for believers and although an Islamic government may choose to enforce some measures it is not essential to do so. As there are no governmental punishments mentioned in the Qurʾān and Sunna, the enforcement of *ḥijāb* laws by governments is left to their discretion regarding determining the level of immodesty of those not complying. Such measures of *ḥijāb* are similar to decency laws that countries like the United States of America have. In the UK, the law falls under the 'Sexual Offences Act 2003' where it is not an offence to be naked in public in England and Wales, for example, but becomes an offence if it can be proved the person stripped off with the intention to cause distress, alarm or outrage. They then run the risk of three possible offences, says a spokesman for law firm Kingsley Napley. These are:

- Indecent exposure—an offence under Section 66 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003;
- Intentional harassment, alarm or distress under Section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986, and;
- 'Outraging public decency' under Common Law.

If a case did get to court the onus would be on the prosecution to prove this intention to upset. If found guilty, the offender would face anything from a fine to several years in prison. As a sign of the times we live in, there are now other laws in the UK that make it a criminal offence for people to do something they call 'upskirting'. Here is what a BBC article states:

> "Ms Martin, 27, was waiting to watch The Killers perform at the British Summer Time music festival in London's Hyde Park in July 2017 when a man put his phone between her legs and took pictures. After informing the police, she was shocked to discover upskirting was not a specific offence and the case had been closed. A few days later she wrote about what had happened on Facebook. Her post went viral with other women sharing similar experiences. Soon an online petition calling for police to reopen the case had received 50,000 signatures. She also wrote a feature for the BBC News website explaining her battle, recalling the dramatic moment she chased after the man who had taken the unwanted photo."[116]

One member of the British Parliament (MP) who supported the bill through parliament expected complete support, "Her bill was expected to sail through the Commons, but parliamentary rules meant it only required one MP to shout 'object' to block its progress." The article further states:

> "New police figures show that more people are reporting upskirting. Data obtained by the Press Association shows that the number of reported incidents rose from a total of 78 between April 2015 and April 2017 to 94 for the whole of 2018. The vast majority of cases involve female victims and male perpetrators, according to the data released by police forces under Freedom of Information laws. The bill was initially blocked by a Tory backbench MP, in a move which was widely criticised."

The *ḥijāb* is not a form of oppression but something which honours a woman, with men commanded to lower their gaze irrespective of how a woman is dressed. The face veil is not mentioned in the Qur'ān but is mentioned in the Ḥadīth as something that was practised by women of high standing and status in the early Islamic period. Female slaves, on the other hand, were permitted to show their chests, hair, back, arms, and calves, the restrictions of male covering only applying to them. The face veil was never viewed as a symbol of oppression in that time and the scholars took the position that it was essential wear when a woman believed she would be harassed or stared at inappropriately. These rules and regulations varied from region to region and depended on local cultural practice. The strict interpretation of *ḥijāb* in places like Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan differs greatly from Malaysia, Africa, India, Chechnya, Syria and the majority of the Muslim world. Nevertheless, all Muslims agree on the essentials of *ḥijāb* which apply to both men and women as elucidated earlier.

In conclusion, there are many other things which people question about Islam, but the essential rule is that Muslims abide by the *Sharīʿa* Law simply because it is God's law and that is a sufficient reason for a Muslim. This does not mean

that objections cannot be answered, indeed they have to be, even though most of them are based on a misunderstanding or misapplication of the law.

6.14 WOMAN LIKE A RIB ḤADĪTH

Sometimes people quote the beginning of the Ḥadīth likening a woman to a rib bone which if straightened can be broken but seldom mention the end which says that men must show kindness to women, and that another likeness to the rib is that it protects the heart and that the wife for the husband is the way a rib protects the heart.

6.15 MAIDENS FOR MEN, WHAT ABOUT WOMEN?

People will also ask why men are promised maidens in Paradise and women are not offered anything, ignoring the fact that women are offered something which is not stated explicitly simply out of modesty. When a man has a son, he can describe a potential wife to his son in detail but when he describes a potential husband to a daughter it is done with more subtlety and dignity simply because of the modesty in which a woman is addressed. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Every religion has a hallmark and the hallmark of my religion is modesty."[117] Sometimes people make hasty statements like saying the Qur'ān only promised a green Paradise because Arabs were in the desert, but they will never appreciate the fact that greenery and nature is something for all times and places and not limited to Bedouin Arabs. If the Qur'ān had mentioned other luxuries particular to a particular time or

place, the people of other times and places would not understand what Paradise contained. Green gardens are a luxury for all times and places, not a unique luxury for the Arabs.

6.16 WOMEN & INHERITANCE LAWS

Other contentious questions like 'Why do women get half the inheritance of men?' are flawed because there is no mention of half inheritance for a female except in one particular case of inheritance, that of a legacy shared with siblings. Otherwise women have differing shares in different inheritances ranging between an 1/8TH, a 1/6TH, a 1/3RD, a 1/4TH, and others. In the case of a brother and sister, the brother receives double the inheritance from a parent because a man must cover all the costs of his wife's maintenance and upkeep, even if the wife is rich. A woman will receive a dowry to her own satisfaction from her prospective husband and he will pay for her upkeep and maintenance irrelevant of whether she works or not and she chooses to save all her own money.

6.17 BLOOD MONEY OF A WOMAN [*DIYA*]

Similarly, some make a point regarding the blood money of a woman being half of that of a man. If a man is killed by manslaughter the penalty in blood money is the value of one hundred camels and if a woman is killed by accident the penalty is the value of fifty camels, and therefore some conclude that Islam deems the value of women less than that of a man. This became a contentious issue for feminists and other Neo-liberals in Pakistan during the 1980s. What they ignore is the

simple point that the blood money for a man is given to the wife and is double simply because the bread-winner is the man and the man is responsible for the upkeep of the woman, while in the case of the woman she is not responsible for the upkeep of the man and therefore her blood money is half, and this does not in anyway reflect the value of a woman's life being less.

6.18 DIVORCE LAWS

Another objection relates to the right to divorce. This remains in the hands of the man, something viewed as male chauvinism, irrespective of responsibilities outlined above which a man has to render even if the woman be richer. What they also fail to point out is that a woman can apply for a mutual divorce settlement and in some circumstances, if the man, for example, fails to pay for the upkeep or is impotent, the woman can have the marriage dissolved. Additionally, at the time of writing the marriage contract, the woman can stipulate that she has the right to carry out a divorce.

6.19 WIFE BEATING

Truncated pronouncements, lacking proper context, are nevertheless effective in a debate. Statements like, 'The Qur'ān permits wife beating', refers to the verse which permits a man to strike (not beat) a dysfunctional wife who does not fulfil her rights to her husband to whom he has paid possibly a high dowry and the maintenance and expenses appropriate to her standard of living prior to marriage. What does this

last statement ignore? It ignores the fact that the one strike mentioned in the Qur'ān is not beating, as this would entail arrest and conviction for assault, but rather a light strike which does not bruise or scratch, described by Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ as a light tap with a *miswāk* that, as mentioned earlier, does not involve raising the hand high. If a man strikes a woman in such a way, he cannot be arrested for domestic abuse unless there is evidence suggesting otherwise.

It should also be mentioned here that many people fail to realise that the man can also be struck by the wife if he is dysfunctional. The only difference is that a dysfunctional husband may well have the potential to commit extreme violence if the woman tries striking him herself and may better be directed to the district judge for him to administer the blow.

These laws permitting dysfunctional wives to be struck lightly once or husbands being administered a strike from the local judge for being irresponsible to their wives are an option which a government can suspend. There is no case here for New Atheism or anyone else to spite Islam for the 'striking the wife' verse as in its entirety it states, ﴾*Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women and tasked with supporting them financially. And righteous women are devoutly obedient and, when alone, protective of what Allah has entrusted them with. And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them first; if they persist, do not share their beds, but if they still persist, then discipline them gently. But if they change their ways, do not be unjust to them. Surely Allah is Most High, All-Great*﴿ [Qur'ān 4:34].

6.20 WOMEN'S INTELLECT & LEADERSHIP

The upshot of the objections here lies in a desperate attempt at emotional manipulation of *Sharī'a* judgements. Another typical complaint made says something like, 'The Ḥadīth says women have deficient intellect and therefore count as only half a witness in court'. This rash comment discounts the fact that women are counted as better and more competent witnesses in affairs in which men are totally disregarded like suckling and childbirth, while in social contracts relating to business, because male-dominated, two women are equal to one man. This does not mean that it is a general rule. If one was to observe the New York stock exchange and the very male dominated bidding floor it would clarify what is being stated here.

In the matter of leadership, women are permitted to be leaders. Caliph 'Umar ﷺ placed a woman in charge of the markets. The only prohibition is for the role of caliph since the caliph must deal with the military and other male dominated institutions. After forty-five presidents in the United States there has still never been a woman president at the time of writing. The objections against Islam are frequently hypocritical, like the suggestion that half the Afghan parliament should be comprised of women after the Taliban were toppled by the United States and its allies, without that representation being found in western countries.

The deficiency of intellect cited by detractors of Islam suggesting the implied stupidity of women is totally untrue. While the Ḥadīth refers to the worth of female witnesses in certain transactions as being half that of men, it is clearly understood that the nature of women is different and that they complement man's nature. That women have a dominance of

emotion is not a bad thing since any absence of emotion in a man can make him cold and calculating—the reason perhaps that some men think women are unreasonable at times when they express their emotions. Yet these emotions, like the feelings of a mother for her children and the feelings of a wife for her husband, are something praiseworthy and perfectly complement the nature of man.

After all, is it not said in the Ḥadīth, that, 'Paradise lies at the feet of the mother'?

'Paradise?', I hear the atheist say, 'What evidence do you have of that? Something you try mollify your women with?!'

And so the circus goes on...

Patience! Islam will continue answering sincere questions, and, ﴾*Surely God is with the patient!*﴿ [Qur'ān 2:153].

THIS BOOK WAS COMPLETED NEAR THE TOMB OF
SULṬĀN ʿABD AL-ḤAMĪD II
IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY ON 23RD AUGUST 2020

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the four schools in Islamic jurisprudence (i.e., Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī) and those who adopt the methodology of the three schools of Islamic theology (i.e., Ashʿarī, Māturīdī and Mufawwiḍa).

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Glossary

A PRIORI • Knowledge considered to be true without being based on previous experience or observation. The original Latin literally translates as 'from the previous'.

A POSTERIORI • Knowledge which proceeds from observations or experiences to the deduction of probable causes. The original Latin literally translates as 'from the latter'.

ABROGATION • See: *Naskh*.

ACCIDENTAL • A quality that is not intrinsic to the being it is attributed to. Such that if this quality ceases to exist, it is not necessary for this being to cease to exist. For example, motion.

AD INFINITUM • Again and again in the same way; forever.

ĀḤĀD • Of a report; not being mass transmitted, rather being transmitted by a relatively small number of people.

ATHEISM • Not believing in the existence of God or gods.

BLASTOCYST • A thin-walled hollow structure in early embryonic development that contains a cluster of cells called the inner cell mass from which the embryo arises.

BLOOD MONEY • See: *Diya*.

BURĀQ • A metaphysical, inter-dimensional being that took the form of a mule-like beast.

CALIPH • The chief Muslim civil and religious ruler, regarded as the successor of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

CIRCULAR REASONING • Known in Arabic as *'dawr'*, a logical fallacy in which the reasoner begins with what they are trying to end with.

CONTINGENCY • Known in Arabic as *'ḥudūth'*, the concept of something existing after non-existence.

CONTINUOUS REGRESSION • Known in Arabic as *'tasalsul'*, a logical fallacy in which the reasoner creates an infinite chain which has no beginning, resulting in the impossibility of the end effect existing.

DIVINE WILL • Of God; a necessary quality entailing that the attributed being is able to specify existence for that which existence can be specified for.

DIYA • The compensation due for the shedding of blood.

EMIR • The high office governing the affairs of the Muslim caliphate.

EMPIRICAL JUDGEMENT • The linkage between two things by observation and the existence or non-existence of something thereby. Such a judgement is formulated by observation of repeated phenomena, even if observed only twice.

EMPIRICISM • The view that all concepts originate in experience, that all concepts are about or applicable to things that can be experienced, or that all rationally acceptable beliefs or propositions are justifiable or knowable only through experience.

EPISTEMOLOGY • The philosophical study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge.

ESCHATOLOGY • The part of theology concerned with death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind.

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY • The change in all forms of life over several generations relying on the process of natural selection. This theory was postulated by Charles Darwin.

EX-NIHILO • Out of nothing.

FREEWILL • The power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion.

FOETUS • An unborn vertebrate especially after attaining the basic structural plan of its kind specifically. More specifically, a developing human from usually two months after conception to birth.

GEOCENTRIC • Having or representing the earth as the centre.

ḤADĪTH • The speech, action and tacit approval of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Tacit approval means that someone said or did something in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ and he did not prohibit the person from saying or doing so, rather he remained silent and approved of it. This definition may also be extrapolated to the companions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

ḤIJĀB • The obligation of covering in Islam. For men, it is obligatory to cover their bodies from their kneecaps to above the navel in public and not wear tight, revealing clothes. For women, it is to cover the hair and body in public in such a fashion which does not reveal the skin and contours of the body.

HELIOCENTRIC • Having or representing the sun as the centre.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN • An argument intended to demonstrate that living organisms were created in more or less their present forms by an "intelligent designer".

ISRĀ' • The miraculous night journey of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in which he travelled from Makkah to Jerusalem on the Burāq.

JIHĀD • Armed struggle against violent elements in humanity. Also, inner struggle as in *Jihād al-Nafs*.

JIZYA • A tax paid by the non-Muslim population to their Muslim leaders which is then redistributed amongst the poor non-Muslim citizens. In return for payment of the *jizya*, non-Muslim populations are granted protection of life and property and the right to practice their religion.

JUDGEMENT • The affirming or negating relationship between two concepts.

KALĀM • Rational theology which promotes theoretical reflection engaged in rationalising and explaining the cognitive content of the existence of God, the nature of revelation, and other matters pertaining to theistic creed.

KHAWĀRIJ • An early Islamic sect which formed in response to religio-political controversy at the time and which was founded upon fanaticism. Amongst their beliefs was that any Muslim who committed a major sin [*kabīra*] was considered an apostate.

LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE • See: *Mukallaf*.

LOGICAL POSITIVISM • A philosophical movement that arose in Vienna in the 1920s and was characterized by the view

that scientific knowledge is the only kind of factual knowledge and that all traditional metaphysical doctrines are to be rejected as meaningless.

MASS TRANSMITTED • See: *Mutawātir*.

MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪʿA • The objectives of Islamic law which aim to preserve the faith, life, sanity, wealth, progeny, and reputation of all citizens governed by it.

MATERIALISM • All facts are causally dependent upon physical processes, or even reducible to them.

MIʿRĀJ • The miraculous ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to the heavens.

MUʿJIZA • A negation of nomic necessity, which God aids His prophet with, in order to prove this prophet's truthfulness to doubters.

MUKALLAF • A legal responsible person in Islam is anyone who has fulfilled a minimum of ten conditions; 1) sound intellect, 2) adolescent, 3) receiving the correct message of Islam, 4) sound senses, 5) ability to investigate the truth, 6) not be threatened, 7) absence of negligence, 8) absence through deep sleep, 9) absence through forgetfulness, and 10) absence of coercion.

MULTIVERSE THEORY • A hypothetical group of multiple universes which comprise all of existence. This theory was postulated by Hugh Everett in 1957.

MUTAKALLIM • A rational theologian who practises the *Kalām* tradition.

MUTAWĀTIR • Of a report; being transmitted to us by so many independent witnesses, such that it would be nomically

impossible for them to have all conspired to fabricate it.

MUʿTAZILA • An early Islamic sect, founded by Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ, which was heavily influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. Their beliefs revolved around three core dogmatic points. Firstly, they believed that the Qurʾān was created, while orthodox Muslims considered the Qurʾān, the speech of Allah, to be uncreated. Secondly, while the orthodox Muslims taught a certain determinism in which all actions, whether good or bad, are ultimately willed by God, the Muʿtazila posited that God desires only the best for man, but through free will man chooses between good and evil and thus becomes ultimately responsible for his actions. Thirdly, the promise and the threat (al-waʿd wa al-waʿīd), or paradise and hell, God's justice becomes a matter of logical necessity: God must reward the good (as promised) and must punish the evil (as threatened).

NASKH • The abrogation of a particular Qurʾānic verse which is superseded by another. All abrogation took place during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and prior to the finalisation of the Qurʾān.

NEW ATHEISM • A reformed atheistic group in the twenty-first century which focusses on the critique and exposition of theism by rational argument. They also have domain in political and social matters.

NIHILISM • The belief in denying the existence of genuine moral truths or values, rejecting the possibility of knowledge or communication, and asserting the ultimate meaninglessness or purposelessness of life or of the universe.

NOMINALISM • The denial of the real being of universals—words that can be applied to individual things having something in common—on the ground that the use of a general word does not imply existence of a general thing named by it.

OBJECTIVES OF *SHARĪʿA* • See: *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa.*

OMNIPOTENCE • The quality of having unlimited or very great power.

OMNISCIENCE • The quality of having unlimited or very great knowledge.

PROPHETIC MIRACLE • See: *Muʿjiza.*

PROPHETIC TRADITION • See: Ḥadīth.

PIOUS PREDECESSORS • See: *Salaf.*

PYRRHONISM • The philosophy of Pyrrho of Elis, which identified wise men as those who suspend judgment and take no part in the controversy regarding the possibility of certain knowledge. He proposed the neutral position of accepting things as they appear without further analysis.

QUANTUM THEORY • Energy, momentum, angular momentum, and other quantities of a bound system are restricted to discrete values (quantisation), objects have characteristics of both particles and waves (wave-particle duality), and there are limits to how accurately the value of a physical quantity can be predicted prior to its measurement, given a complete set of initial conditions (the uncertainty principle). This theory was postulated by Niels Bohr and Max Planck, and later elaborated and refined by Albert Einstein.

QURʾĀN • The word of God revealed by Angel Gabriel ﷺ to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ over a period of 23 years.

RATIONAL JUDGEMENT • The linkage between two things as the existence or non-existence of something thereby. Such a judgement emanates solely from the mind or rational faculty and does not depend on external phenomena.

RATIONAL THEOLOGY • See: *Kalām*.

RATIONALLY IMPOSSIBLE • Known in Arabic as *'mustaḥīl'*. An essence whose existence does not accept affirmation in of itself, since its existence would entail absurdity. It therefore must not exist and cannot exist.

RATIONALLY NECESSARY • Known in Arabic as *'wujūb'*. An essence whose existence does not accept negation in of itself, since its non-existence would entail absurdity. It therefore must exist and cannot not exist.

RATIONALLY POSSIBLE • Known in Arabic as *'mumkin'*. An essence whose existence accepts both affirmation and negation, since neither its existence nor its non-existence entails any absurdity.

RELATIVITY THEORY • A general term encompassing special relativity and general relativity. This theory was postulated by Albert Einstein in 1905.

SALAF • The first three generations of Muslims which comprises the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ [*ṣaḥāba*], their successors [*tābiʿūn*], and the successors of the successors [*atbāʿ al-tābiʿīn*].

SCIENTISM • The promotion of science as the best or only objective means by which society should determine normative and epistemological values.

SCEPTICISM • The theory that certain knowledge is impossible.

SHARĪʿA • Islamic canonical law based on the Qurʾān, Sunna and consensus [*ijmāʿ*] of the early generations, prescribing religious duties and sometimes retributive penalties for law-breaking.

SOLITARY REPORT • See: *Āḥād.*

SOPHISTRY • The use of clever but false arguments with the intent to deceive.

STOICISM • The belief that the goal of all inquiry is to provide a mode of conduct characterised by tranquillity of mind and certainty of moral worth

SYLLOGISM • A valid deductive argument having two premises and a conclusion.

THE ASCENSION • See: *Miʿrāj.*

THE NIGHT JOURNEY • See: *Isrāʾ.*

THEODICY • An explanation of why a perfectly Good, Almighty, and All-knowing God permits evil.

UTILITARIANISM • An action is right if it tends to promote happiness and wrong if it tends to produce the reverse of happiness—not just the happiness of the performer of the action but also that of everyone affected by it.

ZYGOTE • A diploid cell (containing two complete sets of chromosomes) resulting from the fusion of two haploid (a single set of chromosomes) gametes; a fertilized ovum.

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ISLAM ANSWERS ATHEISM

"Imagine there's no heaven ... no hell below us—no religion too"

THE FAMILIAR POST-APOCALYPTIC words of John Lennon's 1970s song 'Imagine'—almost a hymn to the emerging modern doctrine of humanism and atheism, evolutionary scientism and utopian communism (imagine!). For want of leadership, this post-Marxist, globalist 'anti-theist' movement elected 'The Four Horsemen of New Atheism'—Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett, who all willingly donned the mantle of 'punishment from God' rather like Genghis Khan did.

In this book we meet them and their troop as the author, drawing from provocative lectures and debates at universities, mosques, churches, public and informal gatherings, demystifies their strange utopian agenda which has been foisted onto our whole educational enterprise—and in so doing legitimated the near universal, popular media representation and denigration of Islam. All of the issues—from *Jihād* to the treatment of women are confronted and using *Kalām* epistemology Rashid tackles the problem of evil and freewill, and in so doing, articulates the strong proof for the existence of God.

Although clearly tempted at times, the author does not set out to catalogue the iniquities and brutal treatment dealt to so many ravaged countries from the break up of the Ottoman Caliphate on, but parries the aggressive phobias of detractors with clear analytical reasoning and fine exposition of the mercies contained in Sharīʿa rulings. One example of the latter would be the *Jizya*, the small tax for non-Muslims living under its jurisprudence. It sheltered and protected Jews, Christians and other refugee minorities for centuries. Nothing of the kind is envisaged in the endorsed, non-theistic society looking to science, adaption and accident. Instead we are shown the fallacy ridden, morally unbounded worlds they create, the sort that ultimately lead to heedless and random events, as inexplicable as the murder of John Lennon in 1980.

Nor does Rashid shy from reproving Muslims who have failed to use their thinking faculties through their blind following of misconception and political newspeak. This book is for them and any person trying to think their way out of the mess the world is in as the reader is reminded of the unequivocal role of The Qurʾān and prophetic exposition. These, it could be said, would argue that the power to imagine is a gift, but greater than it is the power of reason, underpinning the greatest gift of all, the belief in God.

ISBN-13: 978-1527281691
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